



THE UNIVERSAL ACCREDITATION BOARD ACCREDITATION STUDY COURSE

DIFFUSION

Session **7**

Overview

This session of the Accreditation Study Course is focused primarily on the large body of research into the process by which new ideas are adopted or rejected.¹ The bulk of the session consists of lecture on the Diffusion Process

► **Reading to be assigned BEFORE this session**

- Segments 4.1, 4.2, 5.2, 6.1, 8.2, 9.3, Detailed List of Knowledge, Skills and Abilities tested, Candidate's Preparation Guide for the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations, and Specific Areas of Competence for Readiness Review.
- Diffusion/adoption process, *Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics*, Wilcox et al, or other references in bookshelf

Special Note for Coach

If you have not been coaching recently, please review these preliminary materials: For You, the Coach; The Coaching Method; Managing the Class; About House Rules. Before the day of the class, make sure you are familiar with the content in the reading which candidates should have done, and with the exercises you are going to conduct in this session. Consider any adjustments you may need to make if this is a free-standing unit, or is part of a sequence of preparation classes.

► **Significance of Subject Matter**

- The Diffusion Process has a direct bearing on sections weighted at more than half the Examination for Accreditation in Public Relations

Handouts for this session

- Chart: Adoption Process & Sources – Handout #27
 - Chart: Summary, Pattern, Figure 1 – Handout #28
 - Chart: Summary, Adoption Curve, Figure 2 – Handout #29
 - Summary: Diffusion Process (Text) – Handout #30
 - Calisthenics #7, Applying the Diffusion Process – Handout #31
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- ▶ **Visual Aids needed for this session**
 - Diffusion Process, DF1 through DF8 – Visual #16 (8 pages)
 - Chart: Adoption Process & Sources – Visual #17
 - Chart: Summary, Pattern, Figure 1 – Visual #18
 - Chart: Summary, Adoption Curve, Figure 2 – Visual #19
- ▶ **Other materials needed for this session**
 - Projector for Visuals
- ▶ **New lecture material to be delivered during this session**
 - Diffusion Theory

I. The Diffusion Process

*Instructions: Presentation by coach
or by outside authority with Coach's collaboration ²*

2:00 to 2:30 hours

*Put up Visuals #16, DF1
Diffusion Process*

- ▶ **Comment:** This is a name for the process by which new ideas are adopted or rejected, according to extensive research. It pertains directly to public relations, but for many years it received limited attention in the texts because the research was done in the field of rural sociology (!) rather than psychology or communication. However, diffusion of innovation is now receiving considerable attention as communication theory. The fifth edition of Dr. Everett Rogers book, *Diffusion of Innovations*, has a publication date of August, 2003. Dr. Rogers was among the original researchers into the process, and published new findings in November 2002. I would like to spend enough time on this process to enable YOU to grasp the significance and put it to work. Among other benefits, it will enable you to document, for clients and management:
 - > why you can't accomplish major change in a brief time.
 - > why you can't accomplish it through the news media.
 - > what kind of interpersonal communication is most effective.

²If you are not familiar with the diffusion process, you may want to look around for someone who is, to sit in or assist in this session. If you live in an area with Extension Agents from the U.S. Department of Agriculture or a land-grant university, some of them may be knowledgeable. A university sociology department may have someone who teaches this. An ag-related advertising or public relations firm may have a person with appropriate background. Some communications schools have faculty who teach it.

If you can find such a specialist, you will need to share in the presentation and help translate the research findings into public relations practice, because the specialists will not have the background to make this transition.

Lacking a resource person, we encourage you to forge ahead by yourself with the materials which are provided. The essential information is all there, and we have tried to make the application to public relations clear. If you study this material and find something needs amplification or clarification, feel free to contact the author, Ferne G. Bonomi, e-mail f.bonomi@att.net or 515-233-1493.

- ▶ If you like to cite authorities in our field, I will drop a few names of people who have expressed strong belief that the diffusion process research is valuable:
 - > The late **Patrick Jackson**, whom you may have known as the original editor of *pr reporter* and as a workshop leader at many national conferences. He consulted with Fortune 500 companies in this country and with major corporations internationally.
 - > **Peter Hollister**, of Hollister, Trubow & Associates, who is on the faculty of both CASE³ and PRSA, lecturing on strategic communications strategy.
 - > **Patricia Trubow**, also of HT&A, and also a strategist who does communications effectiveness studies. (*All three have been elected to the PRSA College of Fellows.*)
- ▶ **Now let's go to work on this process.**
- ▶ **Ask the class** to think of an example of a new idea or product in their own experience or field. It may be something which they see emerging, or already introduced or established.
 - > **Probe** if necessary: technology, day care, recycling, print process, World Wide Web, HMOs, ATMs, flexible benefits, wind generators of electricity, “hybrid” electric cars, sperm banks, cloned animals, “engineered” food crops.
 - > **Instruct** class: Keep your new idea or new product in mind as I go on. As you hear the details, analyze the process in relation to your example.
 - > Relate a little history:
 - The original research related to farm people, and the introduction of hybrid seed corn. Hybrid corn is standard stuff now, but at the time it was revolutionary. Farmers then had their own strains of corn. They saved seed each year to plant the following year. They were proud of their ability to select good ears for seed and maintain their quality.
 - Plant scientists had discovered that cross-breeding corn could result in much higher yields and better resistance to pests and bad weather. But cross-bred corn does not reproduce itself. New seed must be cross-bred each season; the farmer must buy new seed each season. The new idea had built-in insults to the farmers’ pride and pocketbooks, alongside the enormous potential for better income and higher production to feed hungry people around the world.
 - The industry was looking at a major problem in persuasion. A substantial amount of research was commissioned and undertaken. More than a dozen major universities in 12 or 13 states were involved. There were 35 or 40 studies in the first 20 years, in various parts of the country.
 - > The studies were replicated and replicated, with consistent results. (Remember the scientific method in research? Replication counts.)

³CASE: Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. Members are affiliated with colleges, universities and other educational organizations; they include public relations practitioners, admissions officials, recruiters and development staff.

- > Then the process was extended to other topics: to women and how they shifted from canning to freezing foods; to doctors and how they accepted new drugs; to schools and how teachers adopted new practices. Minor variations appeared with various new audiences, but the basic principles seem to apply throughout.⁴
- > The research continues, on different topics – more about that later.
- > **Explain:** The diagrams and charts which are available mostly reflect the agricultural research. For your purposes in public relations, unless you are working with farmers, you will need to do some translating for the vocabulary and working conditions of your audiences. In any case, you probably will want to do some updating. That will not overtax your brains. Remember – this is not old stuff. In very recent years it has been applied to the spread of AIDS in Asia, and found to be effective.
- > **Caution:** As we go through the steps which are involved, always apply common sense and your knowledge of your own audiences.

*Put up Visuals #16, DF2
Process, Complexity et al*

- ▶ **Give an Overview:** The conclusions from the research identified the elements in the diffusion process, the stages people go through, and various factors affecting success. You will know the people who organized the material were counting on their fingers – and probably toes – and they had the usual number – because everything comes in fives:
 - > Five **elements** in the theory
 - > Five **stages** in the process
 - > Five **factors of complexity**
 - > **People** come in five kinds

*Put up Visuals #16, DF3
Process, 5 steps
MASK TO SHOW ITEMS IN SEQUENCE*

- ▶ First, the Five Stages people go through in the process:
 1. **Awareness**
 - > Individuals somehow learn of the existence of the idea or product or method. They may have heard the name, but have little knowledge about it.
 2. **Interest**
 - > *The individuals develop interest in the idea . . . they seek more information about it . . . they consider its general merits.*

⁴ Researchers whose names you may encounter in citations or textbooks include George Beal, Joe Bohlen, A. Lee Coleman, Robert M. Dimit, Neal Gross, H. G. Lionberger, C. Paul March, Everett M. Rogers, Bryce Ryan, and E. A. Wilkening.

3. Evaluation

- > At this stage the individuals start making mental application of the idea, and begin to weigh the merits as applied to their own situation. “Can we do this?” “Will it be better than what we are doing now?” . . . “Is the cost reasonable compared to benefit?” . . . “Does this fit our lifestyle (or corporate culture)?” . . .

4. Trial

- > Now the individuals are ready to try out the idea on a small scale. There is a “universal urge to sample.” They don’t want to risk too much too soon. Many farmers planted one bushel of hybrid corn the first year they tried it. Some studies report that the first trial was six acres. That’s a small corner of a corn field. There is a story that a farmer trying out a chemical weed killer designed for field crops took one 69-cent can – and used it on his wife’s flower garden.
- > *At this stage*, the people in your audience need “how-to” information. They need to know specifics: how, how much, when, how long, where, how high, how deep, how hot, how cold, whatever.
- > This is where the process moves into their own hands.
 - People can be led or directed through awareness, information-gathering and evaluation, but they have to make the trial for themselves.
- > This may come quickly – you get a sample of breakfast cereal or toothpaste in the mail and you may try it right away – but it may take a long time for something really new. For the average farmer, five and a half years went by from awareness to trial of hybrid corn. That was a much bigger change than a new cereal or toothpaste.
- > Some figures that it is helpful to know:²
 - Sixty to 80% of your prospects will try a new idea IF it is divisible – if they can do it on a small scale.
 - Only one person in every four – 25% of the population – has the ability to deal with abstract ideas, the ability to translate words into a vision of reality. Those 25%, when they hear an abstraction, translate it to here and now.
 - Three of four – 75% – need sensory experience to get the idea. Those 75% say, to themselves or anyone else, “The other fellow is different. Doesn’t mean it would work here.” So they need to see for themselves.

5. Adoption or rejection

- > They liked the trial; they adopt the idea and continue to use it.
- > Or they found the trial unsatisfactory and they abandon the idea.
- > In the trial stage, they had a set of expected outcomes.
 - These expectations might have been unrealistic.
 - If you are promoting adoption of an idea, it is important to help the individuals have realistic expectations from their trial.

- > If rejection occurs, the likely result is a negative attitude toward the proponents as well as toward the idea.
 - It is wise to maintain contact during the trial process and see if some of the rejections can be rescued.

- ▶ *Anecdote:* A woman's house was beset with boxelder bugs. Maybe you know what they are: little red and black beetles that live around boxelder trees and invade nearby houses. They don't bite or hurt anything, but they are a nuisance. She called the university Help line for such things and learned that the remedy was to spray the bugs and their nests with a detergent and water solution, wetting them down. They can't stand that. Her boxelder bugs disappeared fast. A friend had the same problem; the woman related the remedy. Her friend's attitude became rather negative; the idea didn't work for her, at all. It turned out that the friend had sprayed the outside of her house, around the foundation where the bugs like to congregate, but she sprayed the house, not directly on the bugs. Clarification rescued the rejection.

6. Reinforcement.

- > The original research reports stopped with five stages. Peter Hollister adds another: reinforcement. He calls adoption the preliminary conclusion. If you are dealing with a product, the purchase may end your process. But if you are dealing with concepts or ideas, you may need to continue. The audience or the individual may not "stay adopted." Hollister urges continued action to reach the level of commitment and advocacy of the idea to others.³

- ▶ "Questions about stages?"
- ▶ **Ask class:** "Think back to the innovation or new idea you selected earlier. At what stage do you think it is in the adoption process?"
 - > **Share** a few responses, to check understanding, or move on immediately.
- ▶ **Transition:** We have looked at the stages in the mental process of accepting new ideas and practices:
 1. Awareness
 2. Interest
 3. Evaluation
 4. Trial
 5. Adoption (or rejection)
 6. Reinforcement

- ▶ The rate at which people move through these stages will vary greatly, depending on the kind of individuals involved, and the complexity or cost of the change. Which takes us to the *next set of five factors*:

Put up Visuals #16, DF4

Complexity

MASK TO SHOW ITEMS IN SEQUENCE

► **Introduction of Five Factors of Complexity**

1. The simplest shift is a **change in materials or equipment**.
 - From bar soap to liquid soap or gel, in the shower . . .
 - From stick shift to automatic transmission, in a car . . .
 - From blackboards to whiteboards in school . . .
 - From faucets to motion-sensitive controls, in public lavatories . . .
 - From cans to plastic bottles, for soft drinks . . .
 - From one word-processing system to different software, in the office
 - Relatively minor changes, using different materials or equipment to accomplish the same end result.
2. Next up are “**Improved practices**”
 - A change in technique
 - Doing something familiar in a different and presumably better way, such as:
 - From dialup Internet service to DSL or broadband
 - Setting up a “first call for help” or a central agency for emergency assistance
 - Shifting to “just-in-time” shipment of parts and supplies rather than warehousing
 - From injected to oral vaccine
3. Then we sometimes have real **innovations** – really new things.
 - Probably involving changes in materials and equipment plus a whole set of changes with regard to their use
 - Examples:
 - Solar heating
 - Nuclear power or wind power for generating electricity
 - Satellite transmission
 - Automatic teller machines
4. The most complex is a whole **change in enterprise**.
 - Tobacco companies diversifying into the food industry
 - A dairy farmer shifting to raising hogs
 - A saddle and harness maker shifting to making luggage
 - Insurance companies going into banking, and vice-versa
5. As common sense would tell you, **cost** is a major factor in the speed with which people adopt an idea, and whether they adopt it at all. [It’s always nice when research documents common sense.]
 - Inexpensive ideas are adopted more rapidly than big-ticket items.
 - Concepts which promise the greatest return for the cost in the shortest time move faster than those which take longer to repay the investment.
 - When the profit potential is absent – as in returning productive farmland to wetlands or prairie – the cost factor may be prohibitive.

- ▶ **Stop here and ask:** “Remember the new idea you are carrying along here? Where does it fit in, in terms of complexity?”
 - > Elicit examples from their experience to illustrate factors.
 - > Let’s think about a few other changes, and see how you would classify them, and why:
 - Photography – film to digital
 - Computers – mainframes or minis to PCs . . . PCs to laptops to notebooks to PDAs . . . to the newest thing today
 - Social agencies – from individual functioning to collaboration
 - Communication – postal mail to e-mail
 - (Any others the coach would like to inject here)
- ▶ **NOTE:** If the candidates want you to categorize their ideas for them, duck. Throw the question back to their own brains: “Think it over – would you say it is a change in materials . . . an improved practice . . . a real innovation? Why? You may agree or disagree with them, for purposes of discussion, but then remind them: It is not essential to be able to put ideas into a specific category. The lesson here is that the degree of complexity affects adoption. Look for the factors of complexity that would slow the process, or call for special attention in communicating them to the desired audience

*Put up Visuals #16, DF5
Sources*

- ▶ **Sources of Information:** One of the most useful aspects of this research relates to **sources of information.**
- ▶ One caveat: In the published data, all studies were combined.
 - > There can be variations for any single situation.
 - > You will need to augment the information from your own experience and judgment.
- ▶ The researchers explored the different sources of information which figured into the process of considering and adopting or rejecting a new idea, and put them into four categories (only four categories, not five; that’s the research):
 1. Mass media – radio, television, newspapers, magazines
 2. Experts and agencies. For farmers, these were government agencies such as university extension services or the federal Department of Agriculture. You will need to translate, in your own field, considering who would be comparable. Who are the respected nonprofit sources devoted to advancing the business, profession or industry? Trade associations may come to mind. Research institutes. Foundations.
 3. Neighbors and friends. In the business world, I would add “colleagues” to this category. The farmers’ neighbors and friends were mostly people in the same line of work. Again, think of the parallels. And if you are talking household equipment, “neighbors and friends” in the neighborhood rather than the workplace may still be precisely on target.
 4. Salesmen and dealers.

- ▶ In the awareness stage, more people related first hearing about a new idea through mass media. Mass media also were mentioned most often at the information-gathering stage.
 - > Other sources of information were active in both these stages, but it is useful to recognize that one-way communication is effective at these steps in the process, and led the list.
- ▶ When people moved into the evaluation stage, neighbors and friends were mentioned most often.
 - > Farmers who were attempting to make a decision relied more on their friends and neighbors than on any other source. This relationship – and again I draw a parallel with business and professional colleagues – carries through in other studies. Peer opinion plays a major role.
 - > **A significant factor for public relations planning** is that at this stage two-way communication is effective. Many practitioners will tell you it is essential. When people are evaluating an idea or a concept, they must have a place to ask questions and get good answers from someone with credibility. Many good promotions have foundered at this point because they failed to provide a Q&A function. FAQs (frequently asked questions) on a Web site lean in this direction, but do not in themselves fulfill the need. The person who is evaluating possibilities wants his or her own specific questions answered, from someone with credibility.
- ▶ In the trial stage, the research is not as clear-cut, but friends and neighbors (and colleagues) still are mentioned more than the others. And they are in the top position at the adoption stage.
- ▶ In all stages, experts and agencies rank second as valuable sources of information. People seem to see them as valid and objective sources, whereas they suspect mass media and sales representatives of pushing an idea mainly for the purpose of selling a product. Sales representatives ranked at the bottom, across the board.
- ▶ The more complex the idea, the greater is the tendency to rely on expert opinion. Common sense might tell you that; the research documents it.

*If desired, use Visual #17, Adoption Process and Sources
It is same as Handout #27 below*

- ▶ When you know that certain vehicles of communication are especially effective at certain stages, there is a natural temptation to concentrate on those and abandon the others. That may not be wise.
 - > A researcher at Iowa State University, Eric Abbott, has gone back into the original records and re-studied them. He observes that while one channel was cited as most effective by more people, other channels got a fair share of attention at the same time. All were important along the way, he says; it's just that some were more important than others. So he recommends continuing the mix of media, but making sure you provide the crucial ones at the critical times.⁴

- > Abbott also has studied the use of modern electronic media. At the time most of the diffusion research was done, personal computers were not common, the Internet was not widely known and the World Wide Web did not exist. Abbott concludes that upscale and younger individuals are likely to rely on electronic sources for perishable or volatile information such as market prices, but otherwise the electronic media seem to complement, rather than replace, more conventional media.

Distribute Handout #27, Process and Sources

- ▶ “Questions about sources?”
- ▶ *Ask the class:* “Does any of this align with your example?” Take a few responses.

Put up Visuals #16, DF6

Individuals

MASK TO SHOW ITEMS IN SEQUENCE

- ▶ Now we come to the fact that people come in five kinds, which is surely not news to you. The differences affect the rate at which they are likely to adopt new ideas. Analyzing some personal characteristics, you can get a sense of whom to involve and how to proceed when you want to influence change.
- 1. Innovators.** They are the first to adopt new ideas and concepts. They are likely to be way out in front of other people in the process. They are independent thinkers; likely to be regarded as experimenters and “people who are always trying out new things.” A community probably will have no more than two or three innovators, and it may not have any. If your community has some, you probably know who they are. They are likely to have:
- relatively high net worth
 - a large amount of risk capital – they can afford to take risks
 - prestige and power in the community
 - influence and activity beyond the community
 - many potential sources of information, both publications and informal contacts.

NOTE: Other people watch the innovators and are probably aware of what they are doing, but don’t rush to follow suit. Innovators are not adoption leaders, although they do things first. They are NOT often named by others in their field as “neighbors and friends” on whom one might rely for information.

NOTE: I will be giving you a handout with these characteristics.

2. **Early adopters** come next, on the timeline for adoption. Compared to those who follow them, they are likely to
 - Be younger
 - Have more education
 - Participate more in church, school and community organizations
 - Hold elected office in the community
 - Have more sources of information.
 - Avoid untried ideas, but be among the quickest to use tested ideas

NOTE: Some authorities refer to this group as “**community adoption leaders.**”

3. Then there is a group called the “**early majority.**” What are they like?
 - Slightly above average in age, education and experience
 - Medium high social and economic status
 - Active in community groups, but not in leadership roles
 - Respected in their own circles
 - Perceived as having good judgment and good character
 - Informal leaders

NOTE 1: These people are **especially important links** in the chain of communication. When they start to adopt a new concept or idea, the pace picks up rapidly. They are the “neighbors and friends” on whom the majority relies for information and advice. They do not stand out from the crowd; they have no desire to be prominent. Their strength is their reputation, and they rarely take risks with it. They cannot afford poor decisions. They have more initiative than the majority; when they are pretty sure something is sound they adopt it.

NOTE 2: These are the people we look for to be key communicators, the people we want to equip with answers to their neighbors’ questions. But we must go gently, and use discretion. Visible recognition of their role may defeat our purpose, because it puts their reputation at risk. Involving them calls for finesse and understanding.

4. The **majority** hardly needs explanation. Sometimes they are labeled “later adopters.” They rely heavily on the influence of the early majority.
5. And there always will be “**nonadopters**” or “**laggards.**” Compared with the rest of the population, they tend to be older, less well educated, less involved in the community and have the fewest sources of information.
 - Psychology often has a bearing in this group. Family ties are likely to be very important, with father teaching son and mother teaching daughter. Adopting new ideas from other sources may be regarded as an insult to the parent, or in conflict with the religion and customs absorbed from the parents or narrow family circle.

*Distribute Summary, Figure 1, Handout #28
Put up Visuals #16, DF7
Acceptance process*

- ▶ **Personal and social characteristics** also influence the adoption of new ideas.
 - > Some groups and communities place high value on material gains.
 - Prestige is attached to the adoption of new ideas and techniques.
 - > Elsewhere, more value is placed on tradition.
 - Little freedom is granted to individuals to deviate from the group's customs.
 - If the adoption of new practices goes contrary to the established customs and traditions of the people, the innovator may be ridiculed or lose prestige.
 - > Where there is great emphasis on maintaining traditions and values rooted in the past, change occurs more slowly.
 - > Where emphasis is on individualism and personal success, change occurs more rapidly.
 - > The influence of informal leaders is likely to be greater where neighbor, community and kinship ties are the strongest.
 - > If social contacts are primarily through kinship and visiting, there may be resistance to changes that would tend to disrupt those relationships.
 - > Social cliques serve as barriers to the spread of information outside the clique.

*Put up Visuals #16, DF8
Timeline*

- ▶ **The Timeline:** The curve graphing the percent of adoption over time is a normal growth curve – a slow gradual rate of adoption, then a quite rapid rate, followed by a leveling off.
- ▶ There are no “absolutes” about the elapsed time. It will vary from idea to idea.
 - > For hybrid seed corn, a true innovation with complex factors, approximately five years passed from the time the average farmer heard about it until he tried it; 13 years passed before the majority of farmers adopted it; after 15 years approximately 98% of the farmers had made the change.
 - > However, when hybrid soybeans were developed, they were adopted much more rapidly.
 - > The “personal computer” revolution was accomplished in perhaps five years.
 - How fast do current changes in computer technology sweep through society?
 - Think about the elapsed time on some major social changes:
 - From publication of Rachel Carson's “Silent Spring,” until the banning of DDT
 - From the Surgeon General's original report on the hazards of smoking, until widespread banning of smoking in public places and commercial buildings

- ▶ **The really useful aspect** in the practice of public relations is that there IS a timeline, and it is probably much longer than management or marketing wishes it were.

Distribute Summary, Adoption Curve, Handout #29

- > **Ask class:** Questions about kinds of people?
- > **And ask class:** Do you see any implications here for who you appoint to committees, how you disseminate information, how you get feedback?
- ▶ Research continues
 - > A public relations agency then headquartered in Iowa, CMF&Z, which at the time had offices throughout the Midwest, did a new study and verified the ag aspects a few years ago.
 - > Some studies are taking other directions now – how to persuade with profit disincentives:
 - One example: Return producing farmland to wetlands or prairie.
 - Biggest barrier: Persuaders don't understand farmers' situation.
 - Farmers often feel they can't afford to take the land out of production.
 - > One of the original researchers in Iowa, Everett Rogers, applied the diffusion process to strategies for combating AIDS in present-day Africa, in a book published in November 2002.⁵
 - The research project used a popular radio soap-opera to promote prevention methods and family planning, such as use of condoms, and checked the effectiveness of word-of-mouth communication by measuring the frequency of couples' visits to family planning clinics. The results are described as “positive.”
 - The original study made use of a control group. The program was broadcast in one town only. However, an intervening factor developed: Word of mouth about the program spread, and people started buying shortwave radios to listen to the program in other areas of the country!
- ▶ **Conclusion:** An important aspect is the ability to visualize.
 - > Remember that the researchers said only 25% of the people can visualize an idea.⁶
 - > Other authorities say 13.5%
 - > This is very frustrating to those who can.
 - Public relations people usually are in that 25% who can see the vision. Many of the people you work with, or are trying to reach, are in the 75%.
 - So you need to paint them a picture.
 - Or find other ways to sample the concept – site visits, videos, . . . be creative.
 - > AND, it may not work.
 - A large number of people react only to experience.
 - Which explains the zigzag path of individuals and groups:

- In hiring, in projects, in other ways.
- People hire one kind of person, try one method in a project, find the person or the method doesn't work out; shift and try someone or something different, which may or may not work out better.
- It's a process of trial and shift. We see it all the time in society.

*Again put up Visuals, #16, DF1
Diffusion process*

- ▶ A CAUTION: This is not a recipe for manipulation.
 - > People will fall out at all stages, from preference or good sense.
 - > It is the pathway by which ideas of merit are adopted by individuals.
 - > It is very useful for identifying:
 - where you are
 - what to expect
 - what to do
- ▶ **Point out:** Note influence of community standards in next (and last) handout paper.
 - > This aspect is of particular interest when you are working with ethnic groups, in international settings, or remote areas where outside contacts are limited.
- ▶ **Ask class:** "Take a last look at your own illustration: Where does it fit in to what you have heard today? Can you make any connection?"
 - > Take comments
- Observe:** Value in practice
 - > You surely have noticed that often the first person to mention a new idea hasn't a chance. Let's say you have a great new idea.
 - The idea falls flat when you bring it up.
 - Later it re-surfaces from someone else and gets better reception.
 - This does not mean there is something wrong with you – it's the timeline and pattern.
 - Learn to observe the phenomenon and smile!
 - This may be a useful thing to pass on to a manager when it happens to him or her.
 - > **Ask:** Where do you see this knowledge fitting into a PR plan?
 - Give class time to think, make notes, share.
 - > **Ask:** Anything in your experience where this seems to fit?
- ▶ **Summing up – Most significant aspects . . . in public relations:**
 - > The strategic nature of two-way discussion at some stages
 - Management often fails to allow for that.
 - > The limited impact of one-way communication.
 - Management often fails to appreciate that.

- > Who has influence with whom.
 - People who are one step above, only, in education, experience, status.
“Just like me – only a little more so.”
- > The sampling process, by some means or other.
- > Work with the timeline.

► **Close with Peter Hollister’s points.³**

- > “I believe it is the single most important strategy for our daily work because it outlines a path to behavior modification.”
- > “Letters and direct mail may transmit information, but to stimulate a decision, person-to-person communication is far more influential.”
- > “The idea is older than most of us, but its value is as up-to-date as anything we do. And it works.”
- > And – in March, 2003, Peter added: “The diffusion process’s validity was based on a lot of research around both impersonal and interpersonal information sharing. The (Internet) concepts are still so new in our tool kit that we don’t have the research yet to declare with confidence that e-mail, for example, is more like impersonal or interpersonal communication.”

Distribute Summary, Diffusion Process, Handout #30

Elapsed Time 2:20 from start

II. Follow-Up Assignment: Mental Calisthenics

Here is a mental exercise to stretch a new set of brain muscles, in preparation for the APR Examination. If you have been doing calisthenics in earlier sessions, this one follows, but you can begin here. Do make time for this. The more you find ways to apply the diffusion/adoption process, the more insight you gain. Give class handout #31 Calisthenics #7, Applying the Diffusion Process.

