PERSUASIVE AIMS: LEARNING WITH EMOTION

COMPILED BY BRANDON OELOFSE

rntc media training centre
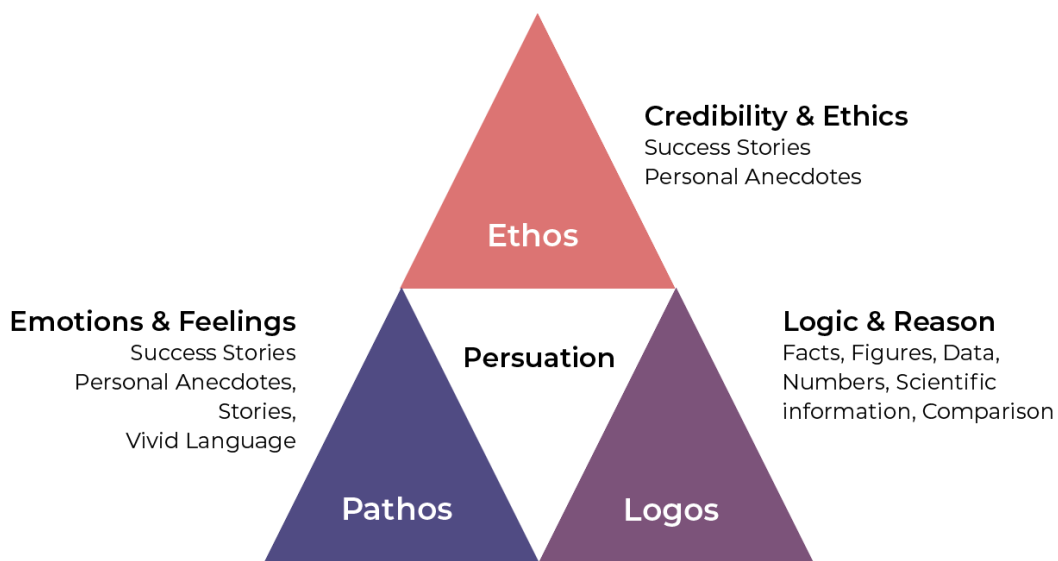
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INTRODUCTION TO PERSUASIVE AIMS

When it comes to journalism, "persuasion" strikes up negative images and connotations. One quickly equates "persuasion" to manipulation and propaganda. Yes, persuasion can be used in a negative way, but moreover it can be used positively and is used positively in many different types of communication.

Persuasion was a key study of ancient Greek philosophers who used persuasive arguments to construct the basis of culture, law, politics and the arts. Philosophers such as Aristotle outline the technique of persuasion as having Logos (logical arguments/reason), Ethos (credibility or trust) and Pathos (emotional value). We will explore these concepts in a more practical way later in this module. For the purposes of definition we could define persuasion as bringing an audience new learning (knowledge, skills or attitudes) with emotion.

Credibility & Ethics
Success Stories
Personal Anecdotes

Ethos

Emotions & Feelings
Success Stories
Personal Anecdotes,
Stories,
Vivid Language

Persuasion

Logic & Reason
Facts, Figures, Data,
Numbers, Scientific
information, Comparison

Pathos

Logos

Aristotelian Persuasion Technique

In developing programmes or communication there are two vital ingredients for success: who you are talking to and what you want to say? Once you understand "who" you are talking to, through the creation of a map that examines a specific target audience, understand who influences them, what agreed realities they have and what emotional payoffs or feeling they have, you can then tailor your programme more specifically.

It is important to start where your audience is. By understanding the target audiences current agreed realities we can see what we need to do to change them.

The aim will:

> › Provide a logical pathway for arguments
> › An emotional journey that is required to make your audience accept a new agreed reality.

In this module we explore Learning and Persuasion and the composition of aims. It is essential to understand what and how we learn and then to explore ways in which that learning can be made accessible to your target audience.

LEARNING

For all of our lives, humans will be learning. 'Learning' can be simply defined as acquiring new knowledge, skills or attitude. As we are traditionally problem-solving creatures, we seek new knowledge, skills and attitudes that will help us survive or compete more effectively.

1. LEARNING DOMAINS

In learning there are three learning domains. These domains are knowledge, skills and attitudes. In each learning domain there are different methods needed to achieve learning.

Knowledge
Knowledge includes sequences of facts, Rules Classifications, Definitions, sequences, placement etc. It belongs to the cognitive domain.
For new knowledge, information and facts are given to the audience.


Skills
Skills are abilities. They are things we can do based on learning patterns or sequences this includes Language, Writing, Physical activities, Sports. Think about these as "How to" things such as "How to drive a car" or "How to cook a roast". These belong to the behavioural domain of learning.

To acquire new skills it is necessary to introduce the concept and then practice is necessary. Consider learning a new language. This requires large amounts of practice.

Attitudes
These are beliefs. These are usually acquired throughout our lives and are often strengthened by immediate influencers (parents, friends, direct family). These include religion, traditions, culture, politics (democracy vs communism for instance). These belong to the Affective domain.

To acquire new attitudes persuasion is necessary. It requires both logical and emotion.
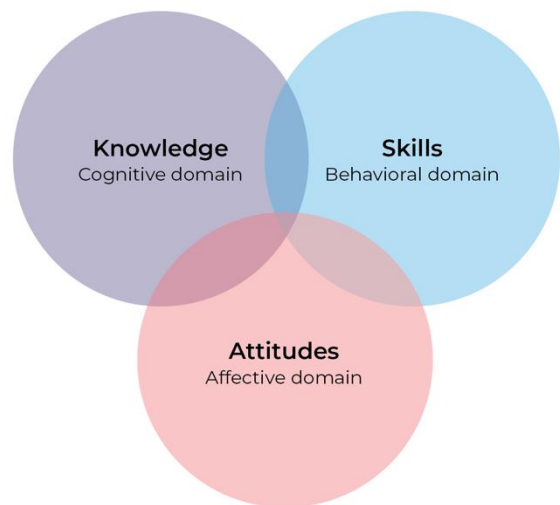
2. WAYS WE LEARN

By the time we are adults, most of us have around 15 years of formal education (if you attended High School and University). In this time we usually discover ways in which we enjoy learning and ways we don't enjoy learning.

Most of our course participants at RNTC usually divide positive learning versus negative learning into the following:

Negative Experiences	Positive Learning
Learning lots of information without application	Application

Fear of getting the answers wrong or punishment	Play, experimenting and a safe space to make mistakes and learn from them.
Unrealistic expectations, not knowing what to do	Knowing what is coming up and what is needed
Theory only	Lots of case studies, examples and activities
Lectures that are boring	Different types of learning: videos, audio, experiments that make learning exciting.
Not interactive	Interactive
Lots of Jargon or much higher level than I am at.	Understanding me as a learner and my needs.
Learning that isn't relevant	
Competition with my peers	Group work or peer working

These are summed up into three ways in which we learn new things, they are:

TELL AND TEST

Just giving information to the audience and testing their retention of the information. Think about the countless exams you have written in your life. How much of the information you studied for days to remember, can you still recall? The chances are very small that you can recall much. This is not powerful learning but a dominant feature in most education systems and communication. We hope that by giving information, it is enough. Unfortunately it is not as it is easily forgotten. This type of learning grew out of the industrial revolution where standardization was necessary and the focus was on quantity.

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

This is also known as "stimulus response learning" in which you are rewarded for doing something good or well, and punished for doing bad.

LEARNING BY DOING

Practice learning is the most powerful sort of learning. When learners try new things they see that the new knowledge, skill or attitude works and that they are able to use it/do it. The learning must start where their current understanding is, use terms they understand, and take them forward from there, step by step.

Practice Learning is divided into three stages:

Stage 1: Perception and Recognition
In the perception and recognition phase, the learner takes in new information. In order for this to be effective it needs to be at their level, meaning it should take into account WHO this learning is for (they recognize themselves). The audience will immediately reject it if it doesn't seem targeted toward them.

Stage 2: Making Sense
In this phase the learner evaluates the logical sequence presented in the learning. It starts at their current understanding and then gives them new learning. In this phase they should also be encouraged to try the new knowledge, skill or attitude through positive emotion or encouragement.

Stage 3: Practice
A chance to try doing or using the new information, skill or attitude.

3. LEARNING AND THE MEDIA

The media is bad at learning. In the media we cannot force people to learn because we can't reward or punish them, we can't test them and we can't force them to try it. We cannot make them do something. But we can inspire them to try it by showing one or more of their peers trying it out. If they succeed, it may inspire the audience to try it too - 'If they can do it, I can do it!'. Especially if they are seeing/hearing someone like himself or herself.

Education via the media cannot complete learning by doing – so we have to use persuasion to get them to try it. Many people in broadcasting do not realize this and think just giving information will create learning. It does not, we need to use story and persuasion in a variety of formats.

4. THE IMPORTANCE OF STORY

Story is something that happens to someone that teaches us something. From an evolutionary perspective, humans quickly learnt that by watching their peers, they could escape danger or death, they could adopt new strategies to overcome enemies or make meaning from problems they faced. After millions of years of evolution this strategy has not changed.

Story is essential in learning because it organizes facts and abilities into understandable sequences. Stories are easily recalled and repeated whereas facts alone are not. Story relies on "someone" that teaches us something. If your audience recognize the story character as someone who resembles them they will be easier convinced that the story is relevant to them.

PERSUASION

Persuasion is learning with an emotional dimension, altering current beliefs and emotional payoffs. Our working definition is Persuasion is bringing an audience new learning (Knowledge, skills or attitudes) with emotion.

There are 3 elements necessary for Persuasion:

› A Credible Source: a person the audience trusts, delivers...
› A Logical approach: presenting new knowledge, skill or attitudes in a way the audience recognizes and understands with an...
› Emotional Appeal: a negative or positive emotion to encourage their new knowledge, skills or attitude.

Each is explained further below.

CREDIBLE SOURCES

Credible sources are people that your audience trusts. Credible sources are broken down into 5 categories. They are placed in order of importance:

	Category	Description	Emotion
1	**People like us**	These are family, friends, tribe members. Depending on the context of the communication. This is your community. Consider "Mothers" "Soccer Players" "People who listen to metal music".	High
2	**Celebrities**	Each community has their own celebrities. Celebrities on a psychological level are the aspirational versions of ourselves.	High
3	**Role models**	People similar to us but that have achieved success. A role model is usually community based. They are accessible, whereas celebrities are more distant.	Medium
4	**Community leaders**	These include policemen, local politicians, religious leaders etc. They are specific to the community.	Medium
5	**Experts**	Depending on the topic, however experts rank low in the persuasive list of credible sources due to their low emotional value. Consider also in the section of learning, the type of learning we dislike, experts use jargon and have a habbit of superiority that the audience disengages with. This is not to say that they aren't important.	Low

Twitter is an interesting study of credible sources. On twitter people can consume news and information from those whom they trust, their own credible sources. A buzzword in marketing and communication is "Influencers" or people that your target audience respect and trust. These people are the credible sources of you target audiences and each audience will have its own, specific credible source(s).

PewDiePie
If you are a millennial gamer you will know the name PewdiePie (Felix Kjellberg), a Swedish Youtube celebrity. Starting in 2010 the young gamer would play and review games on his Youtube channel. His 60 million following rely on him for candid opinion on new games. His influence is so great that game companies launch new indie games by having him play them. For the gaming community, PewdiePie is a "person like us" and now a "celebrity".

LOGICAL APPROACH

Logic assumes you start at your audience. It is their logic that you need to start from, not your own. Look at what your target audience believes. By choosing an influencer and the agreed realities they are linked to, you can decide what you want to change.

We always start with what people already know is true. In the classical story structure this is "the perfect world" – the part of the story in which our audience are comfortable with their current agreed reality and level of knowledge, skills or attitude.

An example of persuasion: Human beings started kissing with their eyes closed only recently. Hollywood had a problem. On film, close-ups of people kissing with eyes open made them look cross-eyed. So they had actors close their eyes when they kissed. If you ask: why do people kiss with their eyes closed? The influencer is 'Gender' (men/women/ people we are attracted to). The old agreed reality was "kissing with eyes open is natural/ok". New agreed realities introduced in films were "Kissing with your eyes closed feels better", or "kissing with your eyes closed is more passionate". The credible source was celebrities. The emotional appeal for 'more passionate' would be 'loved' as an emotional payoff or 'confident'. The logical approach started where film viewers were: "Kissing with your eyes open is ok" and a feeling that the act was 'Insignificant'. They were then persuaded that 'Kissing with your eyes closed is more passionate', making kissing with your eyes closed more 'significant' and 'meaningful'.
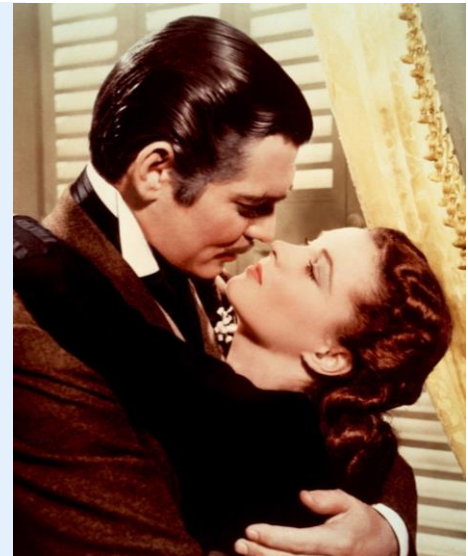
In Persuasion or in "learn by doing" (*Targeted Practice Learning)* we need to assess where to pitch the level and content of the persuasion/learning experience.

Psychologist, Lev Vygotsky identified the Zone of Proximal Development as a way to understand learning by starting with the familiar. Whenever new knowledge is introduced it must start from where the audience is or "what they currently know". Thereafter the new knowledge skill or attitude can be introduced, but it also cannot be too great a leap from what the audience currently knows.

Comfort zone	**Learning zone**	**Anxiety zone**
What the audience currently knows	Zone of Proximal Development	New Knowledge, Skill or Attitude

Consider HIV awareness and education programmes. In the 1980's very little was known about HIV. Large information campaigns were created to educate countries about HIV and create awareness about the disease. How it is contracted, how it can be prevented and how to understand symptoms. Now most people have a base understanding of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. When communicating to adults now, it is no longer necessary to explain what HIV stands for, how its contracted or the benefits of safe sex in prevention.

Similarly consider how you would give a child of 12 information about HIV versus how you would communicate this to an adult. The Zone of proximal development understands that all learning starts with what is currently known (current knowledge, skill or attitude) and brings new learning in structured way that the audience will understand.

EMOTIONAL APPEALS

In order to persuade one must activate emotions or feelings. Logic alone does not persuade. Emotion is a tremendous driver that alters our current understanding and is linked to the formation of memory. When you make important choices such as your home, your car or your partner, these are not usually a logical decision, in fact less than 10% of the population makes choices based on information alone.

The Creation of Adam (1508-12). Michelangelo Buonarroti. Sistine Chapel

In the development of humanity, the human brain is often compared to advancement we are in. For example during the renaissance the brain was thought to house divine gifts. Consider Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel depiction of the gift of God to man. The arrangement of the heavenly beings is in the shape of the human brain. When electricity was discovered, the brain was full of electricity and compared to a light bulb. During the Industrial revolution the brain was considered a machine full of cogs and gears. More recently the human brain is compared to a computer and works like a microchip that stores data. But the brain is more like a field of grass. As we learn something, it's like a person walking through the field for the first time. As we repeat the knowledge, skill or behaviour a path begins to form until it becomes a road of compacted dirt. Synapses in our brain form, around ideas and strengthen to create a shortcut. For evidence of this, consider when you first learnt to drive, the skill of driving required a lot of cognitive ability. Fast forward a few years and you don't think as you shift gears or indicate to change lanes. Returning to the field brain comparison, new knowledge or skills find it difficult to provide new pathways. These are often dismissed as humans are creatures of habit. However, emotion is very good at breaking the patterns we have come to repeat. When we laugh or we cry we break

patterns of understanding in our brains that are extremely powerful in changing our behaviour, skills or attitudes.

When we understand what the audience's feelings/ emotional payoffs are, we can examine alternatives that can challenge a fixed pattern of thinking.

Binaries

Binaries are values or negative or positive. Found in computer programming language it is represented as 1:0. Either this or that, on or off. A binary is an opposite. We tend to think of emotions in opposites or binary terms. In the list below (by no means an exclusive list) note the binaries:

Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Happiness	Sadness	Confident	Shy
Brave / Bravery	Fear	Glad	Upset
Acceptance	Rejection	Clear	Confused
Joy	Anger	Composed	Embarrassed
At Ease/ Content	Distressed	Confident	Ashamed
Admirable	Contemptable	Popular	Lonely
Pride / Proud	Shame	Acknowledged	Ignored
Love/ Loved	Disgust/unloved	Appreciated	Disregarded
Tender	Cruel	Approved Of	judged
Ecstasy	Grief	Competent	Ignorant
In control	Anxious	Free	Imprisoned/trapped
Surprised	Prepared	Important	Insignificant
Trusting	Insecure	Superior	Inferior
Respected	Disrespected	Included	Excluded

An emotion can be opposite but equal to its current value for instance: The audience feels content with their current behaviour and you want them to be distressed that their current behaviour is out of date and foolish.

An example of an emotional appeal for "Why do people use toothpaste to clean their teeth" is that yellow teeth are "shameful" and white teeth lead to "confidence". This emotional appeal was introduced in the 1920's by toothpaste companies in their advertising to get people who previously didn't care about their teeth colour, to use toothpaste.

An emotional can also be of a higher or lower value.

VALUES

Value is either positive (+), negative (-) or double positive (++) or double negative (--). It is important to note that your persuasion must have a value shift. We are hardly encouraged to accept new knowledge, skills or attitudes if we are not encouraged to do so. Encouragement either comes from an opposite (positive to negative emotion) or it can be in an amplified value (positive to double positive/ Negative to double negative). There must be a shift.

Why do we associate pink with women? In the early part of the 20th century pink was not a woman's colour. In the 1950's women had long worn blue overalls and uniforms in factories and other workspaces. As women's rights were starting to take shape pink was chosen as a way to portray strong women entering the work force. Gracing the covers of fashion magazines, in commercials and worn by powerful women (such as Mamie Eisenhower, wife of President Dwight Eisenhower), pink was persuasive to mid-century women. Even the iconic girls toy Barbie, chose this as the brand colour to reflect an independent woman. The persuasion value was from positive, pink was traditionally a Victorian colour for innocence, to a double positive: Power.

AIM STATEMENTS

Once you have understand who you are talking to, the aim provides the "what to say". To create an aim you must first create a target audience statement which comes from picking a slice of the Target audience map.
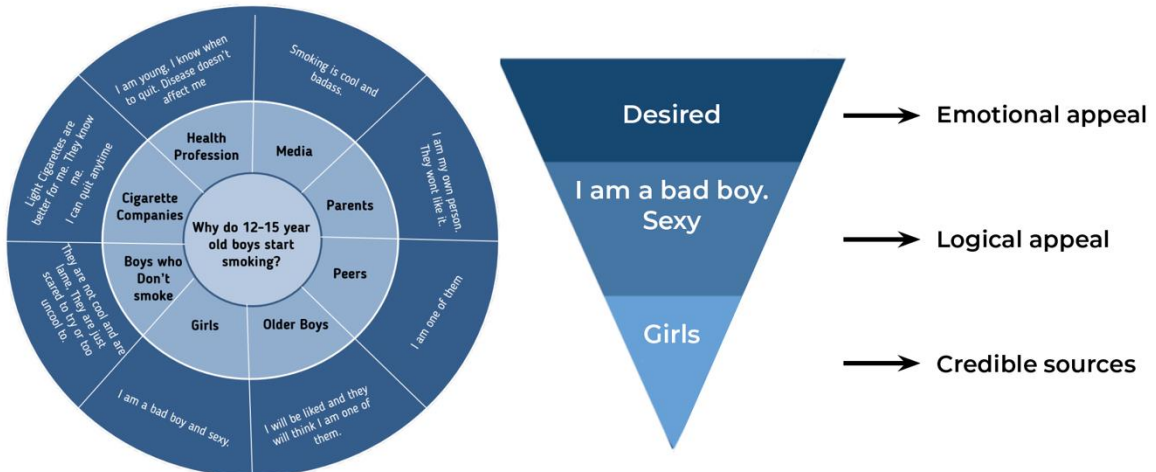
An Example:
I want to target: *"Some teenage boys who believe smoking is attractive to girls, who they believe make them bad boys and sexy and therefore feel desired...*

Your aim statement then includes the target audience + the logical approach + the emotional appeal. For instance:

MY AIM IS TO PERSUADE *"Some teenage boys who believe smoking is attractive to girls, who they believe make them bad boys and sexy and therefore feel desired...*
TO
Believe that smoking makes you unattractive to girls who see them as dirty and weak due to peer pressure and therefore feel shame.

AIMS FOR EACH LEARNING DOMAIN

There are different Aims for Knowledge, Skills or Attitude:

For Knowledge
This is for target audiences who lack information.
The Aim should detail the new knowledge to be delivered for the target audience. For instance "Teenagers don't know the risks of Sexually transmitted diseases between 16-19 year olds".
To do this STORY is essential.

For Skills
This is for the target audience that lacks ability to do something and needs to be persuaded to try a new skill. You need to present the skill through a story. A very good example of this is the BBC's Jamie Oliver and Nigella Lawson, two celebrity Chefs. BBC conducted research into the number of people who followed the recipes they saw on BBC cooking shows and found that less than 3% acted on skills they were shown. To improve the rate of practice producers used Nigella and Jamie in a new hybrid format in which they combined Testimony with Cooking. In his show,

Jamie Oliver invites a group of people to his home, he then goes to the market and sources food, he then returns home and cooks simple yet delicious meals using simple utensils, the guests arrive and love his food. The persuasion here is "If you cook people will like you", "Cooking is easy" and "you don't need a fancy equipment or difficult ingredients to make a winning meal". From research, these were some of the agreed realities of the target audience in why they did not try the skills they saw on TV. In the case of Nigella Lawson, her cooking show centred on sensuality. In "Domestic Goddess", she would usually cook or bake for her husband or best friends. The cooking process would be eroticized often with shots of the hostess tasting the food seductively. The persuasion, aimed at women, was "Cooking is sexy and not only something for your mother's generation".

For Attitude
The agreed realities that you identify signify that there is an attitude change needed. For this you need to Persuade the audience through story.

RATE OF CHANGE

How quickly different groups can be persuaded depends on their category of innovation. Different people adopt ideas or behaviours at different rates. Any persuasion for attitude (belief) change or behaviour change will not affect all parts of a community the same. Some will be quick to change other will be slow to change and need repeated examples of the new idea, some will be very hard to change or may never change.

Innovators	Early adapters	Early majority	Late majority	Laggards
2.5%	13.5%	34%	34%	16%
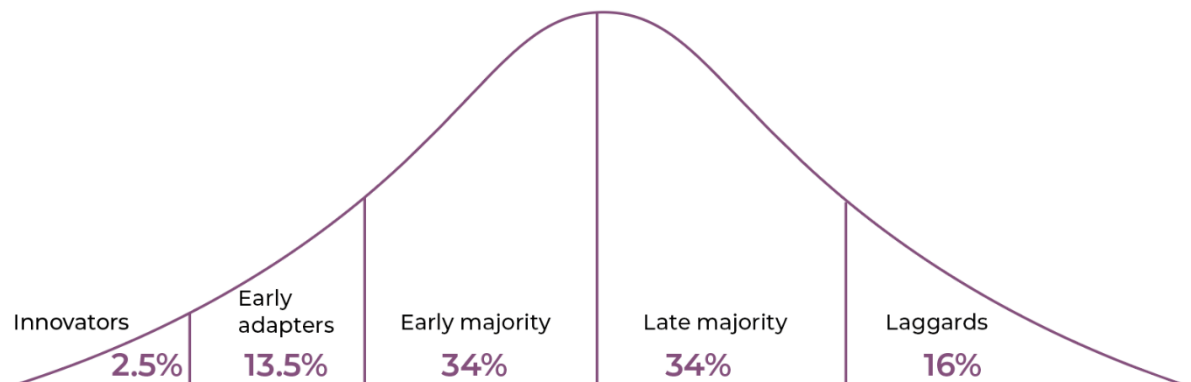
2,5%
"Visionaries" are the experimenters. They are the risk takers. They change based on information only.

13,5%
"The Enthusiasts" are selective and usually check sources before adopting. They are usually the leaders of change. As the early majority look to them for guidance.

34%
"Pragmatists" take their time before adopting a new idea. They need to understand the new concept to adopt it. It needs a track record. They are not leaders and will accept change slowly, but quicker than LM.

34%
"The Mainstream" Adopt in reaction to peer pressure and emerging agreed realities. Most of the uncertainty around the new idea must be resolved before they adopt. The adopt out of necessity not out of choice.

16%
"Critics/Resistors" are traditional and make decisions based on past experience.

Everett Roger, Diffusion of Innovations, 1962

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Except for the innovators and early adopters, all communities needs a long term, repeating campaign strategy that addresses them repeatedly on national, local and personal levels with a variety of types of credible sources. If a campaign organisation cannot operate on all of these levels, they need to partner with other organisations who can deliver the change-making content on national, local and personal levels through that variety of credible sources.

The Early and Late Majority (Secondary Adopters) need repeated persuasion as well as information before they change. They need the new idea repeated many times, at personal, local and national levels, with many examples, and they will relapse often (i.e. they will try it and then go back to the old belief or practice).

Laggards will be very, very slow to change and are outside the scope of most media initiatives – they need direct, long term, multi-level professional support to change. Within Laggards there are Intransigents who will never change (can be up to 5% of a community).