Stage V:

GAINING ACCEPTANCE

In the preceding four chapters we have discussed the procedure which the change agent should follow in preparing for a program of change. During these early phases you have established a working relationship with your client; you have worked with the client system to diagnose the relevant problem areas, and on the basis of information which has been retrieved from diverse resources, you and your client have decided on a potential innovative solution.

At this point the groundwork has been laid for the actual installation of the innovation in the client system. Now is the time for transforming intentions into actions. This is the heart of the plan for change; during this phase all the preparatory work is put to the test, and it is in this phase that you find out whether or not you have a workable solution that can be accepted and used effectively by all the members of the client system.

In the present chapter we will consider how the change agent should proceed with the actual installation of the innovation in the client system. In the sections of this chapter we will consider four issues which are of particular importance during this process:

A. HOW INDIVIDUALS ACCEPT INNOVATIONS
B. HOW GROUPS ACCEPT INNOVATIONS
C. HOW TO CHOOSE A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY WHICH IS EFFECTIVE FOR INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS
D. HOW TO MAINTAIN A FLEXIBLE PROGRAM FOR GAINING ACCEPTANCE

A. Acceptance by the Individual

During the period of installation each individual who will be involved in the change program must be allowed to become familiar with the innovation; he must learn how to use it, and he must come to accept it as a part of his routine behavior. This process usually follows a six-step sequence:

"In addition to providing for innovators and creating the conditions under which innovation thrives, we must also take care of the needs of the 'acceptors'—the majority of educators, those who must learn to accept and use the new resources. We must not be content with lamenting the fact that most people are reluctant to change, suspicious of the new, and not very much interested in creating new things."

Caffrey
awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, adoption, and integration. We will also discuss the role which a change agent should play in helping and supporting the individual through each of these steps.

B. Acceptance by the Group

The individuals involved in the adoption process do not function independently but, as we pointed out in STAGE I, as members of social groups (family, neighborhood, school, community). Therefore, to understand how to coordinate the adoption activities of the individual members of the client system we must also have an understanding of the process by which an innovation is adopted by a social system. We shall also discuss in this section the role which the change agent should play in facilitating this process of innovation acceptance by the system.

C. How to Communicate

The key to success of the change effort may well lie in the effectiveness with which the new ideas are communicated. The relevant "facts" about the innovation must be conveyed to the relevant audiences clearly and accurately. In addition to the "facts" the change agent must effectively convey his support and approval as attempts are made to carry out the change plan. In this section we will discuss the most appropriate style and means of communication for the change agent to employ for different purposes and at different stages in the adoption process.

D. Keep Your Program Flexible

In planning the adoption schedule and procedures, the change agent must make an effort to be realistic and to take into account all the elements involved in the change process. He probably will not think of everything, however, and very often there are contingencies which arise which could not possibly have been foreseen. It may be that a change in plans is forced upon the system by events taking place in the external environment, or it may be that the internal situation itself changes, forcing a change in plans. In any case, the change agent must be willing to review and reassess any or all aspects of the change program, including the choice of the innovation itself.

Therefore, every attempt should be made to prepare a schedule which is both flexible and schematic—a difficult balance to strike, but a crucial one.
A. HOW INDIVIDUALS ACCEPT INNOVATIONS

Full acceptance and adoption rarely come when an individual first learns about an innovation. A person reaches the decision to adopt by a very complex process, but we have learned through research that this process usually follows a predictable pattern. The time period required to reach adoption can be broken down and described in terms of “phases.”

These adoption phases can be used as a guide for the change agent in planning his activities. After describing each phase briefly, we will point out the types of activity which the change agent can best employ during each adoption phase to facilitate individual acceptance of the innovation.

1. The Adoption Process:
   Six Phases

Researchers have identified six phases in the process of individual adoption of an innovation: “awareness,” “interest,” “evaluation,” “trial,” “adoption,” and “integration.”

   a. Awareness

During the initial “awareness” stage, the individual is exposed to the innovation and becomes aware of it. As yet he has only a passive interest and he does not necessarily seek further information. The way in which the innovation is presented to him at the beginning may well determine whether or not he is motivated enough to move on to the second and subsequent stages.

   b. Interest

The “interest” stage is characterized by active information seeking about the innovation. Although he has an interest in the innovation and a generally open attitude toward it, at this stage the individual has not made a judgment as to whether or not the innovation would be suitable for his own particular circumstances. As he gathers more information and learns more about the innovation, the individual’s first positive or negative attitudes toward it begin to emerge. These feelings may prompt him to decide against adoption, or they may motivate him to move on to the next phase in the adoption process.

   c. Evaluation

The third stage, “evaluation,” is generally described as a period of “mental trial” of the innovation, a necessary
preliminary to the decision to make a “behavioral trial.” In his mind, the individual applies the innovation to his own situation and decides whether or not it is worth the effort to try it out.

d. Trial

In the “trial” stage the individual uses the innovation on a small scale in order to find out how it will actually work in his own situation. An alternative method of conducting a trial is to use the innovation on a temporary or probationary basis before moving on to true adoption.

e. Adoption

In the “adoption” stage, the results of the trial are weighed and considered and, on the basis of this post-trial evaluation, the decision is made to adopt (or reject) the innovation.

f. Integration

Even when a favorable decision is made, however, true adoption cannot be considered to have taken place unless use of the innovation becomes routine. It must be integrated into the day-to-day working life of the teacher, or the administrator, or the user, whoever he may be.

2. Matching the Change Agent’s Activities with the Individual User’s Adoption Process

The change agent should try to facilitate each of these six processes. Therefore, in dealing with the individuals in the client system, you should try to coordinate your activities with the adoption stages of the potential adopters. You should try to understand where potential adopters are in terms of these six phases so that you can try to be with them, not ahead or behind. You should be prepared to go back as individual adopters slip back and to keep up as other adopters jump ahead; and you should know when to switch from one mode of communication to another with each adopter.

You may want to use the following guidelines in choosing the behavior most appropriate to each of the individual adoption stages:

a. Awareness

At the beginning of your contact with a potential adopter, your primary objective should be exposure. You
b. Interest

During the “interest” stage you should expect and encourage the individual to come to you for facts and to become actively involved in the search for information. If he is really interested, the individual will also seek information from any other source available, most commonly from his associates within the client system. You should promote

A good “soft-sell” TV commercial will follow all the rules of a good “awareness” message: it is short (15 seconds to one minute), it is interesting (usually featuring a well-known comedian or attractive model in a strange get-up or a bizarre situation), it is easy to understand (the product brand name and some indication of its function is all you get: “Blors are good to eat,” “Zax makes your clothes cleaner,” . . . “your breath fresher,” etc., without any technical details about why and how), and it is rewarding (it makes you laugh).
group discussion, not only as a means of satisfying the need for information but also as an opportunity to air doubts and to mold positive attitudes about the innovation. Group discussion can be used to support individual risk taking.

c. Evaluation

As the individual begins to make his "mental trial," he will continue to seek information, but now an attempt should be made to provide information which will enable him to envision the innovation applied to his own situation. An aid to this type of communication is a demonstration of the innovation in his home environment under conditions that are natural to him. If the individual is shown how the innovation will work for him, he will be more inclined to make a favorable evaluation.

d. Trial

Further demonstration will be necessary as the individual begins his behavioral trial. In addition, he will need training in order to fulfill his new role or to carry out these new activities. At this stage the possibility of experiencing failure becomes very real; now the potential adopter needs maximum support and encouragement from the change agent. You should also do what you can to help the user evaluate his own experience; the results of his trial may not be immediately apparent or clearly appreciated unless you can point them out.

e. Adoption

After trial the client is in a position to decide whether to adopt or reject the innovation, but a decision to adopt is not the end of the story. The adopter may still encounter difficulties in trying to carry out his intention, and the change agent must be prepared to provide further training and encouragement. He must help the individual to adjust to the new situation, and he must be ready to provide his services when problems and unexpected obstacles arise.

f. Integration

After adoption there are a number of things a change agent can do to nurture integration of the new skills or materials into the day-to-day behavior of the client. Practice sessions, reminders in newsletters, and brief follow-up questionnaires on frequency of use and usefulness will all serve

"Resistance will be reduced if it is recognized that innovations are likely to be misunderstood and misinterpreted, and if provision is made for feedback of perceptions of the project and for further clarification as needed."

Watson

MIKE'S PILOT COURSE WAS A "TRIAL" FOR MIKE, BUT FOR HIS FELLOW TEACHERS IT WAS A DEMONSTRATION WHICH GAVE THEM INFORMATION FOR THEIR OWN "MENTAL TRIAL" BEFORE COMMITTING THEMSELVES TO ACTION.

"The load on teachers at all levels and at all times is heavy, and it is difficult enough for them to conduct existing programs, much less carry out new ones. With a busy person every little bit helps—workshops, materials, guides, consultants—and any one of these may make the difference between adoption and rejection."

Woods

"...the change manager is considering introduction of an overhead projector which the school agreed to buy and make available for teacher use. Purchasing the projector and putting it in the audio-visual room does not implement the change. Several more steps must be taken to ensure that the projector becomes part of the working system. Instruction in the operation of the projector must be given to all..."
the purpose. Nowhere is the need for inside change agents more apparent than at this stage (see again discussion, pages 50-53).

3. Taking Advantage of Your Knowledge of Adoption Phases to Prevent Failure

It should be clear that rejection can take place at any stage along the way. Indeed, a decision to reject sometimes may be a good decision; the innovation may not be appropriate for this or that particular client. Assuming, however, that the innovation is, in fact, suitable, there are some things you can do to reduce the chances of rejection:

a. Individuals Must Be Allowed and Encouraged to Progress Through All the Adoption Steps in Sequence. The six steps provide a natural process through which the individual becomes familiar with new ideas and, at the same time, gives up old ways of doing things. Specifically, the change agent should keep these hazards in mind:

(1) Skipping steps (e.g., trial without evaluation or adoption without trial).

(2) Changing the order of steps (e.g., trial before getting sufficient information or commitment to try).

(3) Hurrying through the stages just to meet a schedule. (Most people need time to think things over before they make a change that will affect their lives in a significant way.)

(4) Ignoring individual differences in adoption rates (e.g., assuming that everyone in the client system is aware of the innovation).

You will have worked with some members of the client system in your initial planning and they may be ready for trial; others will not yet have enough information, while still others may not even be aware of the innovation.

b. Individuals Must Be Allowed and Encouraged to Make a Personal Commitment; let them come to you once their interest is aroused, and do not help them when they do not need it.

c. Individuals Must Be Allowed and Encouraged to
Discuss Their Doubts About the Innovation. Everyone has these feelings; they must be worked through and it is best to bring them out in the open.

d. The Change Agent Should Try to Acquire and Offer the Client Resources relevant to each adoption phase (see again STAGE III and discussion of D-A-E-T-E-I-M).

e. Individuals Need Greater Support from the Change Agent When the Actual Behavioral Trial Begins. This may be the point of greatest resistance since the implications of the change become apparent at this point, and such feelings as fear of failure and loss of previous security become salient and threatening. Be prepared to offer this extra support at the time of trial.

B. HOW GROUPS ACCEPT INNOVATIONS

It is impossible to understand how individuals adopt without also considering the social relationships and group structures which bind individuals together. The communication of innovations depends upon a vast network of social relationships, both formal and informal; a person's position in that network is the best indicator of when he is likely to adopt an innovation.

1. Common Things and Key People

One overriding characteristic of groups could be called "commonality." A group can be defined as a number of people who have something in common. Typically they have common backgrounds, common interests, common circumstances, common values, common problems, and, most of all, common needs. A social system is a group of people who have pooled their resources to satisfy needs they have in common. These common things bind them together psychologically so that "mine" becomes "ours" and "self-interest" becomes "our common interest." This arrangement is usually very beneficial for all concerned but sometimes it gets in the way when new ideas and new ways of doing things are introduced from outside. When this happens, the members of the group have to decide individually or collectively whether or not the new thing threatens the common good. At this point, all these common values, beliefs, interests, and backgrounds become potential barriers.

Social organization, by its very nature, is conservative and protective; it is supposed to keep some potential "innovations" out for the preservation of the common good, and when it lets them come in they are supposed to be

ISSUES LIKE SEX, PERSONAL SENSITIVITY TO OTHERS, AND RACIAL ATTITUDES COVER VERY TROUBLESOME AND GUILT-RIDDEN FEELINGS IN MANY PEOPLE. IF THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND THE PROGRAMS OFFERED IN THESE AREAS VERY CLEARLY, THEY ARE LIKELY TO REACT WITH FEAR AND AVOIDANCE. DID MIKE, STEVE, AND LINDA FULLY APPRECIATE THE "LOADED" NATURE OF THE INNOVATIONS THEY WERE TRYING TO INTRODUCE?

"... one of the principal petty barriers to innovation in instruction is the reliance of the mature teacher on filing cabinet drawers full of excellent lesson plans, developed over years and refined by experience, which now must be consigned to the burn barrel to make way for the new math, the new biology, the new English. Older teachers especially do not have the energy they once had, and we have to respect this and understand it and help them forge new tools if we are properly to exploit the chance to change the old ways."

Caffrey

WHEN THE TEACHER IN MIKE'S SYSTEM SAID, "WE CAN'T TEACH MORALS," HE WAS EXPRESSING A VALUE AMONG EDUCATORS, BUT AT THE SAME TIME HE WAS REJECTING AN ESTABLISHED VALUE POSITION OF HIS COMMUNITY.

118
“acceptable,” which usually means “what we are accustomed to.” Therefore, the structure of the group is a kind of filtering mechanism. Various members are needed to “sniff out” new ideas, to expel dangerous ones, or to make the final decisions about “acceptability” for the group as a whole. Sometimes different people are appointed or self-appointed to fill each of these filtering functions.

The first step for the change agent who wants to gain the acceptance of the group is to find out what kinds of barriers are most important and what kinds of filters are used to maintain the status quo. We cannot generalize too much beyond this for all groups because some are very open to new ideas while others will admit almost nothing new.

Diffusion of an innovation begins with the acceptance of the idea by a few key members of a community. From then on, it begins to spread more rapidly, usually through word-of-mouth contacts between friends, neighbors, and relatives. This person-to-person process is very effective; once it has started and there are clusters of people who accept the idea and are “talking it up,” it gathers momentum. A chain reaction seems to be generated once this “critical mass” of key individuals has formed, and there is a rapid upswing in the rate of acceptance until a large majority has been won over.

Three types of people play a significant part in generating group acceptance. These are the “innovators,” the “resisters,” and the “leaders.” Because the characteristics of these three types of people have been studied extensively by social scientists, we are in a position to understand who they are and how they work regardless of the particular innovation we are concerned with.

a. The Innovators

The innovators tend to be intelligent and risk-taking; they travel a lot, they read a lot, they depend on outside sources of information, and they are usually very receptive to influence by outside change agents. They also tend to be marginal to their home communities. They may be viewed as “odd balls” or mavericks, and they do not usually have a great deal of direct power or influence. Hence, they can be both an asset and a liability to the change agent. These people will have commitment to a new idea and are willing to stand up and be counted even though they may be risking the scorn and ridicule of others, but if they have stood up too often for lost causes they may not be an effective ally. Usually, inside members of inside-outside change agent teams can be recruited from this group.

“... Traditionally, the innovator is not popular; he is an annoying minority, a gadfly, an irritant who nevertheless likes to think he will stimulate a pearl within the establishment’s hard shell.”

THE GROUP OF LEADING CITIZENS IN MIKE’S COMMUNITY WHO WERE BELIEVEDLY MOBILIZED IN SUPPORT OF THE INNOVATION REPRESENTED THE "CRITICAL MASS" FOR ACCEPTANCE OF SEX EDUCATION BY THE ENTIRE SYSTEM.

FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF AN OUTSIDE CHANGE AGENT TRYING TO INTRODUCE BLACK STUDIES, LINDA MIGHT HAVE BEEN VIEWED AS BOTH AN ASSET (FOR HER ENERGY AND PERSISTENCE) AND A LIABILITY (FOR BEING SEEN AS A "FLAMING RADICAL").
b. The Resisters

Many social systems also contain some members who assume the active role of resisters or critics of innovation. They are the defenders of the system the way it is, the self-appointed guardians of moral, ethical, and legal standards. Although these people are "conservative" in a strictly logical sense, they may wear all kinds of labels from "radical" and "liberal" to "reactionary."

Resisters of various orders have been very successful in preventing or slowing down such diverse innovations as the fluoridation of community water supplies, urban renewal, the integration of neighborhoods, and the invasion of certain civil liberties by such means as wire tapping and indiscriminate school testing. From the diversity of these issues it should be evident that the resisters do not all march under the same banner. They are a mixed group ideologically even though they tend to function in the same way. As preservers of a social order these innovation resisters play a big part and a useful part in our society by resisting intrusions from alien influences; they are the antibodies in our social blood stream.

c. The Leaders

Many studies of how groups accept innovations have singled out one very important social role which they have identified as the "opinion leader." Opinion leaders are found in any community and they are the key to the growth of any movement. Study after study has shown that there are certain influential people who are held in high esteem by the great majority of their fellow men. They tend to have control of the wealth and power of society. They are usually not the first people to try out new ideas because they need to maintain their standing with their followers. The opinion leaders listen to both the innovators and the resisters so that they can better size up a developing situation. They watch the innovator to see how the idea works, and they watch the resister to test the social risks of adopting the idea. Indeed, in many cases they are eager to observe these changes because their continuance in power rests upon their ability to judge innovations. They want to be the champions of the innovation whose time has come. In other words, they must be able to adopt new ideas at the point at which those new ideas become popularly feasible.

Leadership of any kind has critical strategic importance in a change program whether that leadership be formal, informal, administrative, or elective. The school superintendent, the principal, the esteemed senior teacher will all have a great deal of "opinion leadership" on a wide range of innovations. Some act as legitimators, making the majority

"The most common resistance to educational improvements which would cost money comes from organized or unorganized taxpayers... A few powerful political or financial interests can block programs desired by a large majority of ordinary citizens... The closer any reform comes to touching some of the taboos or rituals in the community, the more likely it is to be resisted."

Watson

STEVE SAID THAT THE EXTREMISTS WHO OPPOSED HIS PROGRAM WERE FROM RURAL AREAS OUTSIDE OF TOWN BUT HE ADMITS THEY HAD INFLUENCE WITH THE MEDIA AND WITH THE "POWER SOURCES." YET HE DOESN'T ASK HIMSELF WHY THESE "POWER SOURCES" WERE RECEPTIVE LISTENERS.

"Some resistance to change may be quite logical and may have well-supported evidence to support resistance. Such opposing persons are often viewed by the proponents of change as impossibly intractable and dismissed as 'rabblerousers' or 'crack-pots.'"

Klein

BOTH STEVE AND MIKE HAD A TENDENCY TO DISMISS RESISTERS AS FEW IN NUMBER, IGNORANT, SICK, AND ISOLATED FROM THE MAINSTREAM OF COMMUNITY LIFE (e.g., COMING FROM RURAL AREAS). IN SOME RESPECTS, OF COURSE, THIS WAS AN ACCURATE PICTURE BUT WAS IT COMPLETELY ACCURATE?
feel that it is o.k. to try something out without having the axe fall. Others serve as facilitators, approving and rewarding the innovators and encouraging others to follow their example, getting clearance, providing funds and release time, and generally making it easier to be an innovator. Still others serve as gatekeepers, opening up (or closing off) access to needed resources, funds, outside consultants, training courses, etc. The gatekeeper is often not the top man in an organization and he may be function-specific, e.g., the business manager, the training director, etc.

2. How the Change Agent Can Work to Gain Group Acceptance

The change agent can use his knowledge of the group to plan and carry out an effective strategy for gaining group acceptance. But in order to plan a strategy he must first have the knowledge. This means once again making a diagnosis of the client system.

a. Diagnosing the Forces For and Against the Innovation

In STAGE II we described the diagnostic process in which the change agent and the client define needs and objectives. However, you may find that you have to make another kind of diagnosis when you already have an innovation which fills these needs and you want to win the support of large numbers of people. Broadly speaking, you now want to address yourself to two questions:

What are the most important common things?
Who are the most important key people?

To answer each of these questions you may find it helpful to draw up a rating form on which you can identify and compare the forces which are acting for and against the desired change. To analyze the "common things" you might make two columns on a sheet of paper, one marked "forces probably favoring this innovation" and the other marked "forces probably opposing this innovation." Under these headings you would then list as many of the group characteristics as you can think of which might affect acceptance: commonly held values and beliefs, characteristic modes of thought and behavior, shared circumstances, common needs, and commonly perceived group objectives.

Having identified a number of such characteristics, you will then want to rank-order them in terms of relative

"An innovation will not be spread until the opinion leaders give their 'stamp of approval.'"

Woods¹⁰

THE LEADERS OF STEVE'S COMMUNITY WERE PROBABLY STILL WATCHING AND WAITING UNTIL THE PSYCHIATRIST SPOKE UP. REGARDLESS OF HIS INTENT, HE SHOWED THE LEADERS THAT THE INNOVATION WAS "HIGH RISK" AND SEALED ITS FATE.

STEVE IMPLIES THAT THE PASSIVE ENDORSEMENT OF HIS SUPERINTENDENT WAS NOT ADEQUATE LEADERSHIP SUPPORT. HE NEEDED MORE LEGITIMATION AND FACILITATION FROM THAT OFFICE.

HENRY'S AGENCY MADE SURE THEY GOT SUCH SUPPORT FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT IN WRITING.

"At each stage of innovation, from its inception to its defense as status quo, wise strategy requires perceptive analysis of the nature of resistance."

Watson¹¹
importance and the relative ease with which they could be altered. Such a list would then provide some good guidelines for an action program to improve the chances of acceptance.

From your previous diagnosis of the client system (STAGE II) you should also be able to draw up a list of individuals who could fit under each of the headings, “innovator,” “resister,” and “leader.” The innovators are probably the easiest people to identify. Some of them will already be working with you as “inside” members of the change team. Others will have been in touch with you and will have been vocal in their support. Still others may be identified as leading spokesmen for one or another of the issues listed under “forces favoring.”

Your “innovator” list should be rated on a number of characteristics such as (1) their degree of understanding and sophistication in using the innovation, (2) the extent to which they are representative or typical of the client system as a whole, (3) the amount of direct influence (“opinion leadership”) which they can exert on other members of the client system and, most importantly, (4) their extent of contact and influence with the leadership.

“Resisters” may be identified for having spoken out previously on the innovation or from having come to you with objections. They may also be identified as spokesmen who personify some of the issues which are “forces against.” It is important, however, to try to identify resisters before they become vocal and committed on this particular innovation. Resisters, like innovators, should be judged for relative sophistication and influence.

Finally, as part of your diagnostic analysis of the acceptance problem you should take an inventory of the leadership. Who are the formal leaders and gatekeepers for this type of innovation? Who are the informal leaders? the example-setters? the facilitators? the legitimizers? The leaders should be rated on such dimensions as (1) their attitude towards both innovators and resisters, (2) their visibility, (3) their relationship to one another, and (4) their ability to lead.

b. Using the Key People as Stepping Stones

A number of social scientists have described innovation-diffusion as a two-step process. In the first step, outside information about the innovation reaches the opinion leaders. In the second step, the opinion leaders pass on the information to their followers by word or example. This process sounds simple but such a process will only work if two conditions are present in the client system: first, the opinion leaders must be innovators or innovation-minded;

AS AN EXERCISE, IMAGINE YOURSELF AS AN OUTSIDE CHANGE AGENT CONSIDERING HOW A SENSITIVITY TRAINING PROGRAM MIGHT BE INTRODUCED TO THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN MIKE’S CITY. FROM WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT HIS STORY YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO DRAW UP A PRETTY GOOD "FORCE" CHART. YOU MIGHT ALSO TRY SEX EDUCATION OR BLACK STUDIES WITH STEVE’S COMMUNITY.

"It should be recognized at the outset that resistance to a change is not the fundamental problem to be solved. Rather, any resistance is usually a symptom of more basic problems underlying the particular situation. To focus attention on the symptom alone will achieve at best only limited results."

Judson

122
and second, these leaders must have very good follower connections throughout the client system.

As a change agent, you usually cannot count on either of these conditions and it would be dangerous to assume them. However, you can use this basic concept of "steps" effectively if you put together all the information from your diagnosis and analysis of roles. An adequate strategy may have to include not one but four stepping stones to gain group acceptance.

How this type of stepping stone strategy might work is suggested in Figure 11.

(1) First, introduce the innovation to a core group of "innovators." Get them to try out the innovation, to become sophisticated in its use, and to demonstrate it to others.

(2) Second, begin to work with some of the concerned citizens who are potential but not-yet-vocal resisters, answering their questions and showing them by demonstration that the innovation does not violate established values and does not threaten the survival of the system as they know it. If you are not able to receive any cooperation from resisters and if they are already vocal and mobilized, you should at least do what you can to protect the innovators and to make the innovation less vulnerable. This means being hard-headed, realistic, and scientific in your approach and having sound and well-reasoned answers for legitimate questions. With these safeguards, you may not be able to silence your detractors but in many cases you may be able to disarm them and prevent them from turning the rest of the community against you.

(3) Third, bring the innovation to the attention of the leaders, allowing them to observe live demonstrations by the innovators and to sound out the reactions of potential resisters.

(4) Allow the leaders to lead the way to acceptance by the rest of the system. If possible, get them to publicly commit themselves and organize themselves into supporting and endorsing committees.

In following any strategy to gain group acceptance do not forget that groups are made up of individuals and that each individual has his own step-by-step process of moving toward acceptance. Thus, while you are working on "evaluation" or "trial" with innovators, you may need to be

"In certain situations the participation of defenders in the change process may even lead to the development of more adequate plans and to the avoidance of some hitherto unforeseen consequences of the projected change...He should encourage the interplay of advocates of change and defenders of the status quo."

Klein

BOTH MIKE AND HENRY IMPLIED THAT STEPPING STONE STRATEGIES WERE EMPLOYED TO INTRODUCE INNOVATIONS TO THEIR COMMUNITIES.

IN MIKE'S COMMUNITY IT WAS FINALLY POSSIBLE TO AROUSE OPINION LEADERS TO CONCERTED DIRECT ACTION ON BEHALF OF THE INNOVATION.
working on "awareness" and "interest" with leaders. A good program should be planned to provide each set of individuals with the kind of information they are ready for at a given point in time.

C. HOW TO COMMUNICATE

Gaining acceptance of innovations is, in large part, a matter of effective communication. If you can get the right message across to the right people in the right way, acceptance will follow. But this is not a simple matter. Communication is a complicated process which is strongly influenced by the personality of both the senders and receivers, the message and the medium. In a few pages, we cannot say very much about all these factors but we can note some special advantages and disadvantages of various media and suggest how a multi-media communication strategy could be put together.

1. Choosing the Right Medium for the Right Job

The effective change agent cannot limit himself to one medium. You should be aware of the possibilities of various methods of presentation and you should be prepared to use
several in combination as circumstances warrant. Of the six types discussed below, three (written-oral presentation, films, and demonstrations) are primarily one-way media: they allow you to send a message to your client but they do not allow him to send any counter-message to you. The other types, person-to-person, group discussion, and training events are two-way media: they give the client a chance to tell you what his needs and his objections are. The best type of program probably has both one-way and two-way media in various combinations, but it is important to recognize at the outset that one-way media, by themselves, rarely provide an adequate vehicle for gaining acceptance of innovation.

a. Written and Oral Presentations

Lectures and textbooks are still standard fare in college teaching but they should be used more sparingly and judiciously by the change agent. These traditional message forms are effective only when the audience is thoroughly "tuned in" and "turned on." This will only apply to a handful of innovators who are already aware and interested. For the majority of potential adopters, written and oral communications can only serve to provide awareness and, even then, only if the message is brief and to the point.

In more progressive communities, opinion leaders will be media-oriented; e.g., some of them will read about the innovation in the local newspaper and may even get to a PTA meeting to hear a lecture. This kind of exposure may create awareness and interest but it may also create awareness and resistance if the message is not carefully composed. A major difficulty with written communications is the fact that the change agent has no control over the conditions of exposure. Words and phrases can be torn out of context and meanings badly distorted with no assurance that the receiver even heard or read the important parts of the message.

b. Film

Because of these and other drawbacks to the traditional written and oral message forms, we have seen a trend in recent years toward carefully packaged audio-visual presentations, of which the TV commercial is perhaps the most notorious. Such presentations are primarily effective in creating awareness and perhaps interest. At their worst, film presentations are simply lectures on celluloid, but if the medium is used to best advantage various visual effects can be created to make the message more attractive. Films only work if the film maker invests a tremendous amount of time, money, and creative energy in the production. Most change agents will not have the resources to make their own films,

"AWARENESS-AND-RESISTANCE" WAS THE RESULT OF THE INITIAL EFFORTS OF MIKE'S GROUP IN EXPOSING COMMUNITY OPINION LEADERS TO THE PROPOSED SEX EDUCATION PROGRAM. BECAUSE THEIR INITIAL MESSAGE ABOUT THE PROGRAM AND ITS GOALS WAS NOT CAREFULLY COMPOSED, THEY WERE TEMPORARILY RESTRAINED FROM IMPLEMENTING THE CURRICULUM CHANGE.
but it is well worth a check to see if any films are available which might help you introduce the innovation to the client system in an interesting and lively way. If films are available, it is always wise to preview to make sure production quality is high before you risk exposure to a large or important audience. Some films are also useful as means of getting a group started on thinking about their problems. It is sometimes possible to make 8mm films in the client system itself, to illustrate various problems. In any case, films should almost always be used in conjunction with group discussion and as a prelude and stimulus to group interaction on the problem or the situation.

c. Demonstrations

Sometimes it is possible to put on live demonstrations of the innovation for potential adopters, or to take potential adopters to other settings where the innovation is already installed. This approach can be effective for building interest and for pre-trial evaluation but, as a technique, it should be handled carefully. There are two conditions which must apply before a demonstration is advisable. First, the setting and the conditions must appear to be natural and similar to those prevailing in the client system. Second, the change agent must know that the demonstration will work and will clearly illustrate the positive features of the innovation. A demonstration that fails through clumsy execution can be a disaster for a change project.

d. Person-to-Person Contacts

It is important for the change agent to make personal contacts with leaders, opinion leaders, potential resistors, and other key people. Such contacts have several advantages over the one-way approaches discussed above. First, they give you feedback on the reactions of the client system, including some idea of the kinds of resistance which you are likely to encounter and which you must plan to overcome. Second, the personal contact is very helpful in increasing the "reality" of the innovation. It forces the person contacted to start thinking about it seriously. Furthermore, it gives him an opportunity to express feelings of doubt and difficulty; it allows him a chance to talk about his own needs in personal terms.

Personal contact with the change agent is probably most vital at the time when the potential adopter is about to make a trial. Your presence is required then (1) to legitimize and reinforce the decision to try; (2) to provide needed information and help in the trial itself; and (3) to applaud and otherwise reward the trial effort, once made. This last is

"...Commissioner Allen has announced the possibility of creating a state-sponsored, centrally located education center for the demonstration of novel programs. During the interviews people from all across the state flatly rejected the idea. 'Too artificial,' they said, 'what can we learn from a "show-off" school where specially selected teachers and specially selected kids, using the best equipment and materials, perform in a sort of convention atmosphere?'

Brickell"
especially important when the results of the innovation trial effort are not immediately visible.

On the other side it should also be said that person-to-person contact is a very slow and costly method if you plan to reach each and every member of a large client system. It is therefore sometimes necessary to restrict these personal contacts to key people and, wherever possible, you should try to multiply yourself by training and encouraging insiders to take on this change agent task. Actually, personal contacts from insiders are probably more effective for legitimizing innovation, especially if these insiders have some degree of opinion leadership. They help get the innovation around the "NIH" syndrome (see opposite).

e. Group Discussions

Group discussion meetings of various sizes can be used to mobilize popular support but, like the demonstration, they can also mobilize resistance if not adequately handled. Group discussion serves many of the same functions as person-to-person contact, but you can reach more people and you can use the group to promote individual acceptance. Groups have these special advantages if they are well handled.

(1) They increase the feeling of safety and the willingness to take risks.

(2) They help the individual user move toward a commitment to try out the innovation.

(3) They legitimize feelings of doubt about the innovation and about one's own ability to try it out. Once these feelings are thus legitimized they can be spoken. Out in the open they can be discussed frankly and considered in a rational light. Some of these feelings do have a rational basis, some do not. Those that do must be answered by the change agent and/or the promoters of the innovation. Those that do not will probably dissipate if they are handled in an open and honest way.

(4) They give the client system an opportunity to move toward a consensus on the innovation. Individuals who favor it will begin to find others who favor it.

(5) They give potential adopters the feeling that they are actually participating in a decision with the freedom to say "yes" or "no."

"If persons regard the change as coming from an outside source, it may receive only half-hearted support which is sometimes called the NIH treatment—NOT INVENTED HERE."

Watson and Glaser

15
If possible, a group discussion should be an enjoyable experience which is rewarding in itself. People who come to a meeting are usually extending themselves, making a real effort to get involved; their effort should be rewarded.

f. Conferences, Workshops and Training Events

When complex innovations are under consideration, it will usually be necessary to arrange conferences or workshops which involve key members of the client system. Such meetings can be used for diagnostic sessions (STAGE II), for identifying relevant resources (STAGE III), for brainstorming and choosing alternative solutions (STAGE IV), for facilitating individual awareness, interest, and evaluation, for providing a protected environment to allow practice of new skills and trial use of the innovation, and to mobilize social forces (leaders, opinion leaders) on behalf of the change. Any one conference could conceivably accomplish all of these goals but it is probably advisable to specify in advance the particular subset of change goals you want to achieve in a particular meeting.

The design and management of such conferences is an art, not a science, and it deserves a handbook of its own. Here we can only suggest some general outcomes that conference planners should strive for. The ideal conference:

(1) is an enjoyable experience in itself for all participants.

(2) leaves all participants with some new learning of:

- ideas
- problems
- findings
- solutions
- or skills.

(3) leads to diffusion of such learning beyond those participating (which usually means that opinion leaders in the client system have to participate).

(4) leads to subsequent self-training, self-practice back home, further inquiry activities by participants back home.

(5) multiplies itself (causes participants to initiate similar meetings for others).

(6) leads to more permanent linkage (liking, trust, and respect) among individual members and the groups they represent.
2. *Orchestrating a Multi-Media Program*

One medium among those listed above may be just right for one particular audience at one point in time, but this does not constitute a total program for gaining the acceptance of the client system as a whole. A complete program will inevitably require the use of several different media approaches to reach various groups with the kinds of messages they are ready to hear. Four principal considerations should enter into your planning for a multi-media program:

a. *Think of the type of people you wish to reach.* What kinds of media are they accustomed to, and what kinds will they respond to?

b. *Plan to use different media approaches at different stages* of individual acceptance. (Section A of this chapter.)

c. *Plan to use different media approaches to reach different key individuals* (the innovators, resisters, and leaders discussed in Section B of this chapter).

d. *Build Redundancy into Your Program.* Never assume that anybody gets the message the first time. Review it with them again and again via different media.

D. **KEEP YOUR PROGRAM FLEXIBLE**

Throughout this handbook we have stressed the value of planning for innovation, utilizing a systematic step-by-step approach based on what you know about how people change their attitudes and behavior. However, once you have a plan, you should not be overly rigid in the way you carry it out. You must remain flexible, ever willing and able to change your plans as you gather more data on the client system and its reactions to the innovation. As you proceed you may, for example, find that the innovation is completely unacceptable to a large minority and that it divides the community and causes unhealthy conflict. Such a reaction should lead you either to revise the strategy of gaining acceptance, to readapt (redesign, repackaging, etc.) the innovation so that it is more

*This is not a text on the use of media. The reader should consult Appendix B for more specific advice, particularly the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Media and Technology at Stanford University, Stanford, California.

"The aim is to develop an awareness about print and newer media so that we can orchestrate them, minimize their mutual frustrations and clashes, and get the best out of each."

McLuhan

HENRY'S AGENCY TRIED TO DEVELOP A MULTI-MEDIA PROGRAM. HOW COULD SUCH A PROGRAM HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED BY MIKE AND HIS GROUP? STEVE AND HIS TEAM? LINDA AND THE PEOPLE WHO SUPPORTED HER?
acceptable, or perhaps to abandon the innovation altogether in favor of another which diffuses more readily.

To maintain a flexible posture, you should always be prepared to (1) readapt the innovation, (2) shift gears (up, down, reverse), and (3) change your implementation strategy.

1. Adaptation of the Innovation

Even when you have done a very careful job of selecting and adapting the innovation prior to introducing it to the client system, you may still find that more adaptation is necessary. You should be prepared to give concessions to meet various client objections in order that the major portion of the change be accepted. In order to ensure greater understanding of the nature of the innovation, you should be prepared to translate the relevant information to make it more meaningful.

2. Shifting Gears

Timing and proper pacing are important factors in gaining acceptance. Therefore, you should always be ready to shift gears, to move faster or slower than you had originally planned, depending on the readiness of your clients.

a. Shifting Up

Sometimes you may over-anticipate resistance to the innovation and may have an overly elaborate and extended program for introduction. When you sense that your clients are more sophisticated or more open than anticipated, you should accelerate your program.

b. Shifting Down

You may also find that you have expected too much of your clients and that they are unable to absorb information and to adapt to the innovation as rapidly as you had planned. Therefore, there should be enough flexibility in your planning to allow for a relatively long period of time for diffusion of the innovation. For example, you should be prepared to reset the projected date of final adoption in the light of unforeseen problems that may arise in the various stages of the change process.

c. Reversing Gears

The common belief that “if at first you don’t succeed, try, try again” may not always be true in gaining acceptance of innovations. Sometimes, more pressure and more hard

FURTHER ADAPTATION WAS NECESSARY BEFORE MIKE’S AND LINDA’S INNOVATIONS WERE FULLY ACCEPTABLE. THE SAME WAS PROBABLY TRUE FOR HENRY ALTHOUGH HE DOES NOT SAY TOO MUCH ABOUT THIS.

MIKE’S GROUP WAS ABLE TO SLOW DOWN AND REVERSE GEARS WITHOUT SCUTTLING THEIR PROGRAM. APPARENTLY IN STEVE’S CASE THE PROJECT HAD TO BE ABANDONED. WAS THERE ANY WAY STEVE COULD HAVE REVERSED GEARS WITHOUT ABANDONMENT?

“When a new idea is first introduced to us, we begin to think about and consider it from many different viewpoints. In time, its novelty and strangeness disappears. Eventually, it becomes familiar... When sufficient time is not allowed for such adjustment, those involved in a change could become bewildered or apprehensive and develop feelings of opposition.”

Judson

“More new methods, hell! I can’t farm half as well as I know how already.”

Anonymous Farmer
salesmanship will only increase the resistance. This is why your diagnosis of opposing forces is so important. Frequently you will be more successful in the long run if you retreat in the face of strong opposition, concentrating instead on reducing the motivation for this resistance.

3. Changing Your Implementation Strategy

Throughout this handbook we have urged change agents to adopt an open and collaborative strategy with their clients. This posture is more likely than any other to ensure the best use of new knowledge. Collaboration works for three reasons: First, it gets the client involved and motivated; second, it improves the quality of the adoption because the client understands it better; and third, it may improve the quality of the innovation itself, because the client can make valuable contributions in adaptation to his setting. However, there is an additional reason for choosing collaboration, which is purely ethical: to choose to be purposefully non-collaborative is to break faith with a client; such a stance presumes that the client is unwilling and unable to innovate on his own initiative and must be coerced, cajoled, or tricked into acceptance.

After all this is said, it must be admitted that sometimes collaboration just will not work and, when it fails, there are a number of alternatives that should be considered, ranging from complete abandonment to complete deception. The quotation opposite suggests a strategy of “fait accompli,” one approach which might be employed when you think collaboration will not work. However, Watson and Glaser’s message is basically the same as ours: be flexible about your strategy for gaining acceptance; use collaboration wherever you can, but remember that other approaches are possible, and sometimes, perhaps, these other approaches are necessary to achieve an end which all desire.

“A natural impulse of many people is to meet force with force; that is, to overcome the opposing forces by exhorting, appealing, arguing, urging, inducing, and scolding. Increasing pressure against the opposing forces usually will increase the resistance pressure, and as a result, tension will be heightened. Frequently (but not always), the wisest and most effective course of action is to focus on ways of understanding and reducing resistance rather than trying to overwhelm it.”

Watson and Glaser

“Some social psychological studies have shown that it is sometimes more effective to introduce the changed operation first, before attempting to bring about the desired attitude change. This is the fait accompli technique: The situation is changed by responsible management decision, then workers are helped to understand and accept it.

“This technique runs directly counter to much that has been said, here and elsewhere, about enlisting participation in planning for change. There are situations, however, where it presents marked advantages. As long as a change seems merely hypothetical, many persons find it difficult to come to grips with it. They are beset by vague fears and discomforts. When the change has been actually experienced, its advantages may be more apparent.

“The frequent success of both the participative method of decision-making and the fait
accompli technique raises the question, 'When is each preferable?' Generally, if the consequences of the change can be realistically understood by the people at the working level, their cooperation in designing change is helpful and the participative method is more effective. If, however, the results of a change are not clearly and rationally predictable—if there is a heavy 'loading' of irrational prejudice—then experience may be the best teacher. Under these conditions, if earnest and skillful efforts to understand and reduce resistance are fruitless, and the legitimate and responsible authorities still believe the action to be essential, the change may be more likely to come about if imposed from the top. If, in a limited area of the organization, or for a limited time in the organization as a whole, it proves successful, attitudes may be more effectively changed than they would be by many hours of advance argument."

Watson and Glaser¹⁹
Stage VI:

STABILIZING THE INNOVATION
AND GENERATING SELF-RENEWAL

It is probably not accidental that two of the four change agents who reported cases at the beginning of this book could find nothing to say about stabilization and termination. When the change agent has succeeded in gaining acceptance, he is very much inclined to think that his job is done and that it is now up to the client to take over the task of long-term maintenance. This is, indeed, a reasonable assumption; the responsibility of the change agent must end somewhere. His time and energy are not unlimited and there are clients in other places with problems waiting for his help. In this final chapter we will, therefore, try to suggest when and how the change agent can leave the project feeling reasonably sure that his client has been well served and has the capacity to carry on alone.

If you have been able to develop a change program along the lines suggested in previous chapters, your task will now be relatively simple. Because you have worked collaboratively with the client and involved him directly in all phases of the change process, by this time he should be well trained in helping himself; he will have a good understanding of diagnosis, retrieval, selection, and so forth. That is the ideal, but we know that it is not usually the reality; hence this chapter had to be added.

STAGE VI is divided into three sections. In the first we consider the problem of how to insure the continuance of a particular innovation once it has been accepted by the client system. The second will introduce the concept of system self-renewal and suggest ways in which the change agent can move the client toward a self-renewal capacity. In the third brief section we will explore some of the problems related to the act of disengagement, the final termination of the relationship with the client.

A. INSURING CONTINUANCE*

The key word in insuring continuance is "internaliza-

*Some of these points have already been made in STAGE V but they bear repeating.

"Many an innovation brought in with great fanfare is superficially accepted, and months or years later, things have drifted back to the way they were before. Nobody may have openly resisted the change. Nobody revoked it. It just didn’t last . . ."

Watson and Glaser

WHICH OF THE FOUR CASE STUDY INNOVATIONS HAS THE BEST CHANCE OF LONG-TERM SURVIVAL? WHY?

133