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Mainstreaming the Laggards- An Approach

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Abstract

In the diffusion of Innovation theory, the last group which adopts an innovation is the laggards which account approximately 16% of population of the society. It consists largely of elders, and those with low socioeconomic status. Laggards believe mostly friends and neighbors as information sources, dislike change, and accept new things only when forced to. The innovators, early adopters and early majority are the population who adopts a change or new idea without any reluctance so we need to think about what we will do about our laggards – in the past we could often get away by ignoring them – but nowadays some systems may only work if everyone uses it (like use of apps- Arogyasetu) and non-use is not an option. Mainstreaming the laggards is important for the overall development of the community. Certain approaches can be followed for streamlining the laggards at par with the late majority will be a great success for the extension functionaries/ sociologists.

Introduction

According to Rogers (1962), Laggards are the minority group (approximately 16 percent) of population, which is the last group to try or adopt a new product. They are mostly traditional and hesitate to accept a change. It is peculiar, quaint even, but sometimes also a little pathetic; to see people deeply wedded to products long since updated and improved by technology.

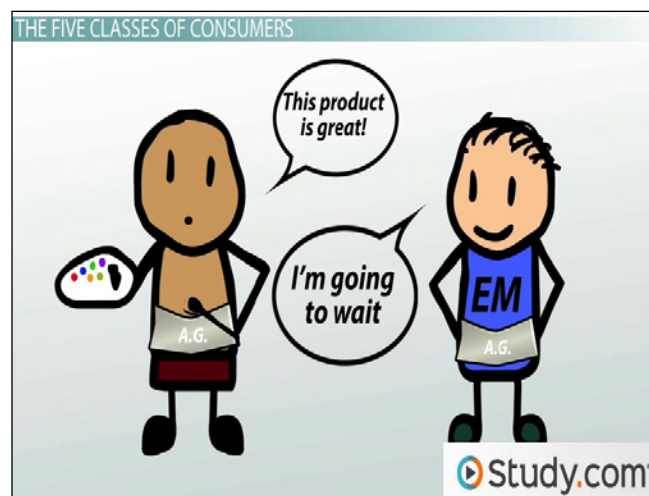


Figure 1: Laggards

The laggards of the society should be identified and different approaches may be taken to streamline them with that of late majority and early majority. As the laggards are comprised of the traditionals mostly senior person, it is a little bit a hard job to motivate them. But following few approaches can be executed to mainstream them.



Figure 1: Laggards

Approaches to Mainstream Laggards

In general, a laggard refers to a stock. The term can also describe a company or individual that has been lagging behind or underperforming. It is often used to describe the good vs. bad, as in leaders vs. laggards. Because of poor performance and inadaptability to new ideas, investors want to avoid laggard, because they achieve less-than-desired rates of outcome. In broader terms, the term laggard signifies resistance to progress and a persistent pattern of trail behind.

First we need to understand; why one fails to perform..??

Most slackers in the society are not incompetent. Usually, a Role Mismatch or Lack of Motivation makes a professional loss of interest and switch off. However, motivation, guidance and a roadmap can turn a laggard into star performer.

An extension functionary must start with an open mind in his or her efforts to motivate a laggard and identify the reasons behind underperformance. Each individual innately wants to contribute his best. Various reasons of consistent below performance may include- i) Innovation content is not to his or her liking, ii) lack of guidance, iii) Job description and actual role mismatch, iv) The extension functionary is judgmental about the person.

The extension functionary must gather specific facts on a so-called laggard's performance. He should collect examples of non-performance, list gaps between expectations and delivery. In lack of preparation, you are likely to give sweeping statements about the person. That will leave the person in ambiguity, further de-motivated and generally worse than before.

The next approach is to show the road map to the population to fill the gap. The methods he/she can follow are- i) Through a clear conversation, ii) Setting clear expectations, iii) Showing a proper roadmap, iv) Proper handholding the person. He/she has to listen deeply, patiently and with compassion because some people can express their views and feelings right away, while others take time to open up.

If an honest conversation has taken place and the individual is in a positive frame of mind, invite him or her to create specific goals and action points with timelines. Help him identify who will monitor that progress, and how. This will achieve a constructive closure.

Conclusion

Persuading laggards to take the lead and join the world of social media is very challenging, frustrating and can often seem hopeless. But the extension functionary should approach them empathetically, should understand them and should persuade/ motivate them to come out to frontline.

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