

Diffusion and Adoption Reflection

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### **The Evolution of a Revolution**

Attending a university can be dangerous. New ideas are a threat to old wineskins. New tools can make old tools obsolete. This fact generally results in the polarization of two groups of people: The “we like things the way they are” group pitted against the “let’s try something new” group. Fans and feuds ensue as the lines are drawn.

I want to write about the rollout of one technology tool that I have used prolifically in my degree program at the University of West Georgia – a wiki. For many in my organization, the wiki rollout was a “disruptive innovation” as described by Clayton Christiansen in his landmark book, *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns* (2008). The days of hardcopies of memorandums being hand-stuffed by volunteers into mailbox slots in a church office have gone the way of the dinosaurs. This paper will attempt to chronicle the evolution of this rollout and the resulting revolution that has transpired in our organization by the implementation of wikis.

### **The Setting**

Our context is Christian Life Church, a faith-based institution where I am employed. As stated, the paradigm-busting technology I integrated was the use of wikis to enhance effective communication and collaboration in our workgroups. The team I lead is comprised of nearly one hundred volunteer leaders. As a church staff member, I enjoy not only the public endorsement of the senior pastor but also a long string of “wins” with my constituency thus building a foundation of credibility from which to implement change.

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### **“What’s a wiki?”**

This question was the single most asked question among stakeholders. The short answer was: “A wiki is a web page with an edit button.” The bigger answer was that this innovation provided a relative advantage for us to use it: Increased efficiency and effectiveness in our respective roles.

Christian Life Church runs about 800 in attendance on a given Sunday. The leadership core that I lead is comprised of a diverse group of people which includes multi-generational, multi-ethnic, men and women of various educational levels and economic situations. The reason the wiki represented a logical “change of choice” is that it requires no additional hardware/software to be allocated or purchased at the campus. Every stakeholder with Internet has access from their desktop computer (at work or at home), laptop, smartphone, or iPad has access to the wiki 24/7/365. The ability to work asynchronously and provide instant information access to useful information relevant to their respective ministry responsibilities piqued the interest of even the most skeptical naysayer.

### **The Implementation**

As the author of our course textbook, Ellsworth (2000) explains, educational or technological change, to be successfully integrated, requires a strategy. The diffusion of this innovation was done incrementally, using test-beds of small groups in this order:

- The church staff
- One department
- Multiple departments

The selling feature to the staff was that the wiki service provider that we used – a popular vendor called Wikispaces - allows for private wikis to be purchased at a modest \$5 per month

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charge. The wikis provide a space for online meeting agendas, calendars, links to web sites we want to explore, uploading documents in a secure area, and other collaborative incentives won the favor of nearly all stakeholders.

### The Outcome

While we continue to grow in our understanding as an organization of how to exploit the full potential of the multiple wikis currently in use, we can say that diffusion of this innovation was very successful. We can legitimately say, without fear of exaggeration, that this technology has “revolutionized” the way we conduct business. The disruptive innovation effect has worked in a positive fashion and fundamentally changed the way we do the business part of the ministry.

### The Artifacts

Figure 1 below shows how we found ourselves in the Change Communication Model.

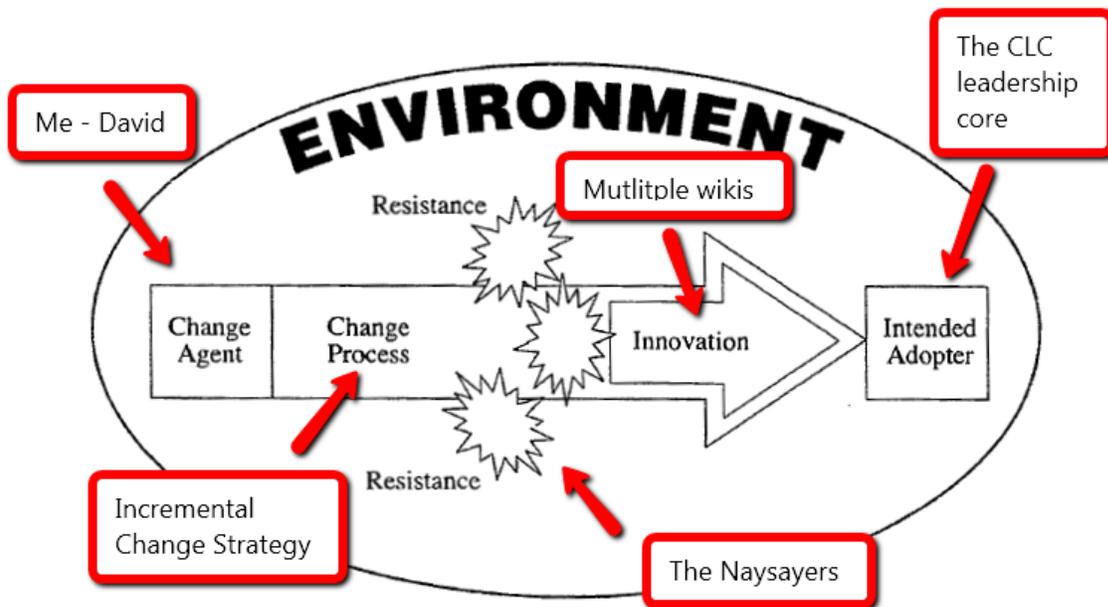


Figure 2. The Change Communication Model

Figure 1: CLC and the Change Communication Model

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Even though we were able to locate our organization in the change process in the figure above, as Ellsworth points out: "...it is not enough to simply describe the parts or to show how they fit together. Understanding the relationships among the components illustrated in the change communication model is an important part of the strategy for change..." (Ellsworth, 2000, p. 25).

Ellsworth's research and commentary helps us understand better how each piece of the change process interrelate as this quote asserts: "What is critical to understand about the components of the change communication model as a system – is the effects that each is likely to have on the others" (Ellsworth, 2000, p. 27).

Figures 2-7 below are cropped screenshots of the wiki mastheads that have successfully been rolled out and are in active use.

### **the clc journey wiki.**

This wiki is used weekly and extensively in webinars for strategic planning among our Journey Implementation Team.



**Figure 2 The CLC Journey Wiki**

### **the clc leaders wiki.**

This wiki is used in an asynchronous fashion by almost fifty leaders as a one-stop shopping solution for information relative to the group or project that they lead.



**Figure 3 CLC Leaders Wiki**

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### **the clc student ministries wiki.**

This wiki is used by our student ministries leader to collaborate with her team.



**Figure 4 CLC Student Ministries Wiki**

### **the clc emerging leaders wiki.**

I built and released this wiki to administrate the class I teach for future leaders in our church.



**Figure 5 The CLC Emerging Leaders Wiki**

### **the clc school of leaders wiki.**

Nearly forty persons use this wiki to post weekly discussion threads and obtain critical data for their successful participation in our two-year Bible Institute called the School of Leaders.



**Figure 6 The CLC School of Leaders**

### **the clc pastoral staff wiki.**

Our senior leader tasked me to build a wiki for him to manage his staff more effectively. Each wiki page contains an “FYI” section, a “Need Feedback” section, and a “F2F Call or Meeting Request” section.



**Figure 7 The CLC Pastoral Staff Wiki**

## The Conclusion

The diffusion of the wiki innovation to enhance team collaboration essentially produced a revolution in the way we communicate in our organization. Having gained new knowledge from exposure to the research of Rogers (1995) and his five innovation attributes, in retrospect I now see that we were successful in introducing the technological change because our rollout capably answered the change questions listed below for our own stakeholders:

- Relative advantage – Is it better than what I’ve got now?
- Compatibility – Does it conflict with my values, practices, or needs?
- Complexity – Is it too difficult to understand?
- Trialability – Can I try it out first and go back to what I was doing if I don’t like it?
- Observability – Can I watch someone else using it before I decide whether to adopt it? (Rogers, 1995, p. 208)

I think I’ll post these on our wiki giving credit to Rogers!

References

Christensen, C., Johnson, C.W., & Horn, M.B. (2008). *Disrupting class: How disruptive innovation will change the way the world learns*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Ellsworth, J.B. (2000). *Surviving change: A survey of educational change models*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Information and Technology, IR-103. Retrieved June 15, 2010 from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>.

Rogers, E.M (1995). *Diffusion of innovations*. New York, NY: Free Press.