



By Andrew Scane, Software Deployment Manager

Thanks to the early adopters

The Diffusion of Innovation is a well-established theory that explains how new technologies are adopted over time. Most of us would agree that the success of the truss industry can be largely attributed to our ability to adapt to and apply emerging technologies into our businesses. The rate of adoption is important and we rely on the Innovators and the Early Adopters that have the vision and are prepared to invest and take the risk. The Technology Adoption Life Cycle model (pictured below) describes the typical adoption cycle of new technology. Since the original theory (published in the early 1960s), the concept of a chasm has been introduced and usually applies between the early adopter group and the early majority.

Crossing this chasm is important for the success of the technology. Many technical ventures fail to make it across this chasm to the pragmatic mainstream market. While the success of any new technology relies heavily on the insight and enthusiasm of the early adopters, acceptance from the early majority is a key to the ongoing acceptance and success.

One of the more recent innovations in the truss industry that has 'crossed the chasm' is integrated workflow management systems.

The number of truss plants that have adopted integrated workflow management systems has now moved from a small number of early adopters to the larger early majority market segment.

The risk and often significant investment by the early adopters is appreciated, but seldom measured, as it is accepted that there will be both success and failure. It was with this in mind that a small number of truss plants that were early adopters of integrated workflow management were asked if they could quantify some of the benefits to their businesses.

Although there were several benefits described by the group, the combined impact was a surprisingly significant reduction in office labour and overhead costs.

Most reported that the reduction in separate applications and processes previously required prior to the adoption of integrated workflow management could be measured by the time savings.

Another measurable benefit was the time savings in accessing information required for the key tasks. The ability to have ready access to all the documentation and communications prior to and while actively performing tasks directly improved individual output.

The ability to monitor the performance of business processes was also identified as an advantage in identifying inefficiencies, applying changes and measuring their real-world impact.

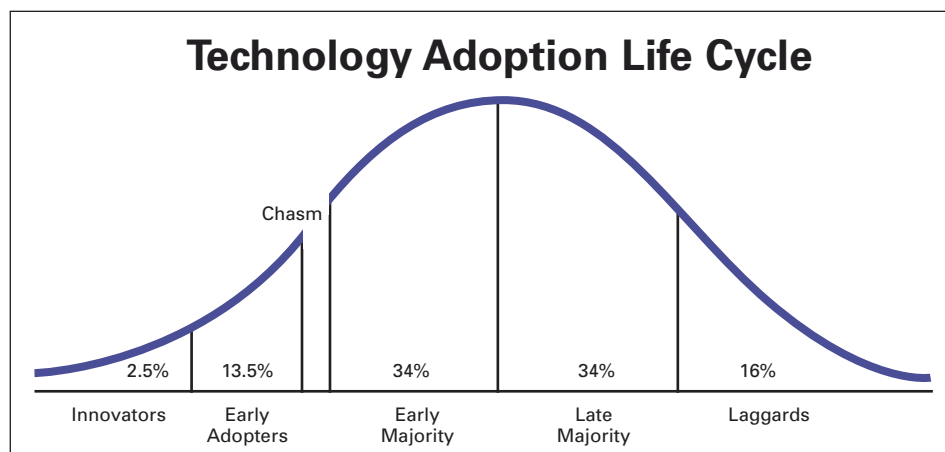
The key benefit reported by most of the group related to how they have been able to manage the increased production needs of the market over the past few years. One fabricator said, "We would not have been able to ride the wave of the last year and a half without our management system."

Interestingly, most of the truss plants in the group had increased their production output and yet in almost all cases had not required additional office staff.

These comments were followed up with some deeper discussions. What emerged was that one of the most significant benefits of integrated management workflow systems was the ability to reduce mundane administrative tasks. The number of administrative duties required in a truss plant was much greater than expected and a management workflow system will often identify areas where administrative duties can be reduced or re-allocated. In many cases, these administrative tasks can be removed entirely, as they will be integrated into the workflow.

When this was related to the business costs the results were also surprising. The impact was a direct reduction in labour and overheads costs as plants increased production (in some reported cases by over 30%) without increasing office staff. This result is another significant benefit of technology adoption for our industry that provides opportunities for increased efficiencies and reduced costs.

These results would not be possible without the vision and commitment of the early adopters, so once again, we are grateful to this small group that have helped another technology to cross the chasm. **T**



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