**HOW TO MAKE SENSE OF IT INNOVATION WAVES**

The IT innovation wave machine presents a powerful institutional force that can be difficult for an executive to resist. Asking the right questions — particularly about any gaps between adoptions and successful implementations of the technology — can help you discern the right approach for your company at any point.

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| **Attention:** The innovation is in the early stage of gaining a wave of attention. | Assess the magnitude and progress of the wave of attention — and adjust your own attention accordingly. | • How much attention is the innovation being given on the Web? Is that attention growing or declining, and at what rate?  
• What conferences are devoted to the innovation? Is attendance growing or declining, and at what rate?  
• What is the current business and trade press coverage devoted to the innovation? Is it growing or declining, and at what rate? | • What is your own organization’s attention to Web content on the innovation? What have you learned of importance?  
• What is your own organization’s participation in conferences devoted to the innovation? What have you learned of importance?  
• What is your own organization’s consumption of this business and trade press coverage? What have you learned of importance? |
| **Adoption:** Companies are beginning to announce that they will adopt the new technology. | Assess the magnitude, composition and progress of the wave of adoption — and tailor your own commitments and actions accordingly. | • What is the current level of adoption of the innovation among companies? What is the growth rate, and is it increasing or declining?  
• What vendors have branded their offerings under the innovation’s buzzword, and how rich and compelling are these offerings?  
• What are the platform and network effects, if any, associated with widespread adoption of the innovation?  
• Is there a discernible fashion bubble associated with current adoption of the innovation, and how large is it? | • What are the various reasons given for current adoptions? Do these reasons have validity in your own organization? Which of the current adopters are in your industry?  
• Which of the vendor offerings are a good fit for your organization and would enable your organization to leverage its application portfolio?  
• What are the ramifications of these platform and network effects for your own organization?  
• To what extent is your own organization attracted to this innovation because others have adopted it? |
| **Implementation:** Companies are now beginning to actually implement the technology. | Assess the magnitude, composition and progress of this wave in comparison to the wave of announced adoptions; draw your own lessons from that. | • What is the current implementation gap among adopters of this technology — that is, the gap between the number of companies who have announced they will adopt the technology and the number who have successfully implemented it?  
• Which consultancies provide implementation services for the innovation? What are their capacities, and at what rate are those practices growing?  
• What implementation “horror stories” associated with the innovation are being reported, and what lessons are being drawn from them? | • Is your own organization a contributor to this adoption gap?  
• What does the adoption gap suggest for your organization, as an actual or potential adopter of the innovation?  
• What is your own organization’s need for consultancy implementation services? Can these services be obtained at reasonable cost?  
• Has your own organization experienced any of these horror stories? What do the stories suggest for your organization, as an actual or potential implementer of the innovation? |
| **Value:** Companies that have implemented the technology are now beginning to achieve value from it. | Assess the magnitude, composition and progress of this wave and find your own way to add to it. | • What is the current gap, among organizations that have implemented the innovation, in achieving promised business value?  
• What are the compelling success stories among organizations that have adopted and implemented the innovation and gained value from it? | • Is your own organization a contributor to this gap?  
• What does the gap suggest for your organization, as an actual or potential implementer of the innovation?  
• Does your own organization have (or will it be likely to have) such a story? What would this story be if you could write it? |

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