

2006

# The perks of high tech PR: examining diffusion of innovations in public relations and its effect on practitioners' roles, status and power

Jennifer Plaisance Hughes

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*, [jhughes@lsu.edu](mailto:jhughes@lsu.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses)



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Hughes, Jennifer Plaisance, "The perks of high tech PR: examining diffusion of innovations in public relations and its effect on practitioners' roles, status and power" (2006). *LSU Master's Theses*. 1724.

[https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_theses/1724](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/1724)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [gradetd@lsu.edu](mailto:gradetd@lsu.edu).

THE PERKS OF HIGH TECH PR:  
EXAMINING DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS  
AND ITS EFFECT ON PRACTITIONERS' ROLES, STATUS AND POWER

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Liberal Arts

in

The Interdepartmental Program in Liberal Arts

by  
Jennifer Plaisance Hughes  
B.A., Louisiana State University, 1998  
May 2006

© Copyright 2006  
Jennifer Plaisance Hughes  
All Rights Reserved

## **DEDICATION**

To my husband, Mark, who makes me smile every day.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First I would like to thank my advisor Lance Porter. I was very lucky to find a friend and teacher who believed that I could do research. Thank you Lance, for all you have taught me through your example and your instruction.

I would also like to thank the other members of my committee, Dan Borné, Rudy Hirschheim, and William Clark. You have all given me support and helpful feedback along the way. Without you, this work would not have been possible.

I'd like to thank the best parents in the world, who taught me the value of education. Mom, I want to grow to have your wisdom and class, and Dad, I will always admire your energy and humor. Thanks for your advice and encouragement.

Finally, I'd like to thank my husband, Mark, for his unconditional support and love. Mark, without your help I would never have been able to finish this process. You always believe in me more than I believe in myself. The happiness I feel when you walk into a room is worth more than any degree.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
ABSTRACT .....	vi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	4
CHAPTER THREE: HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	18
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY .....	24
CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS .....	32
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION .....	73
REFERENCES .....	80
APPENDIX A: ROGERS' ADOPTION OF INNOVATIONS CURVE .....	85
APPENDIX B: EMAILS TO RECRUIT HIGH-TECH PRACTITIONERS .....	86
APPENDIX C: FLIER TO RECRUIT HIGH-TECH PRACTITIONERS .....	88
APPENDIX D: EMAIL TO RECRUIT LOW-TECH PRACTITIONERS .....	89
APPENDIX E: MODERATOR'S GUIDE .....	90
APPENDIX F: ADOPTION CURVE MARKED BY A PARTICIPANT .....	93
APPENDIX G: OPEN CODING EXAMPLE .....	94
APPENDIX H: COLOR KEY FOR AXIAL CODING .....	95
APPENDIX I: AXIAL CODING EXAMPLE .....	97
APPENDIX J: SELECTIVE CODING EXAMPLE .....	98
APPENDIX K: FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS .....	99
VITA .....	327

## **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative study examines the field of public relations through the lens of Everett Rogers' diffusion of innovation research. The fields of public relations and diffusion of innovations are paired for the first time in a study of the effects of proximity to innovators on public relations practitioners. In-depth interviews and focus groups with practitioners working in both high-tech and low-tech environments are transcribed and coded to compare the effects of technology adoption on roles, status and power in organizations.

This study not only contributes to the literature in public relations and diffusion of innovations, but also its findings are useful to PR practitioners seeking career benefits through strategic technology use.

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

A public relations (PR) practitioner working in an innovative and high-tech research organization has a unique exposure to innovations and technologies not yet accepted by the mainstream public. In such a technology-rich environment, PR practitioners interact frequently and directly with the innovators who create new communication technologies. Does this close proximity to innovation affect the way a PR practitioner communicates? Are those working in technology organizations using new tools that have not yet diffused to other PR practitioners? Since PR researchers have linked technology use to improved career roles and power for public relations practitioners, this information on proximity to innovators can be useful at a practical level for job advancement and satisfaction. These questions and more are examined in this study.

Various studies show examples of the growing importance of technology in the field of public relations. This study will use the term “practitioners” to refer to public relations practitioners. Literature on the topic of technology in PR shows that practitioners now use innovative communication tools extensively (Esrock, 2000, Ryan, 2003, Porter, Sallot, Cameron & Shamp, 2001). Prior research shows that public relations practitioners are no longer laggards in the adoption of new technologies (Porter & Sallot, 2003), and those in different roles and industry segments use technology in different ways (Porter & Sallot, 2003, Taylor, Kent & White, 2001, Kang & Norton, 2004).

For six decades Rogers (2003) and others have studied how innovative technologies diffuse through social groups (Rogers, E.M., 2004, Baker, E., Geirland, J., Fisher, T. & Chandler, A., 1999, Weenig, M. W. H., 1999, Wejnert, B., 2002). Early adopters of new technologies act as change agents and influence others to try innovations (Rogers, 1995). Although Rogers pointed out the importance of communication and even persuasion in the diffusion process over two decades ago (Rogers, 1983), very little has been studied on how the diffusion of innovations

framework relates to public relations, a field filled with experts in communication and persuasion. No research currently exists on the influence of these interpersonal networks and the affect of proximity to innovators in the adoption of technology by PR practitioners. This paper sets out to fill that gap.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

## Diffusion of Innovations

Diffusion of innovations pioneer Everett Rogers (1995) defines diffusion of innovations as “the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.” His work proves that social networks are the primary means by which technology is spread through interpersonal channels (Rogers, 2004). These networks, according to Alter and Hage, (1993) are a basic social form that permits inter-organizational interactions of exchange, concerted action and joint production.

Influence and communication determine how innovations move from a source to an adopter. Rogers’ theory places adopters at the cutting edge of new technology development, “innovators.” Other groups that follow innovators include “early adopters,” who then share the innovation with the “early majority” group. After the majority of a social group adopts an innovation, the “late majority” catches on. Rogers labels the last few members of a population to adopt a technology, “laggards.” A typical population distribution shows the members of each of the five adoption categories in the form of a bell-shaped frequency curve, with only 2.5% of the population representing innovators (Rogers 1995). See appendix A for Roger’s bell curve showing the various categories for rates of adoption.

Countless other researchers have studied innovation diffusion including Weenig (1999). His mail questionnaire to a random sample of 346 Dutch employees of a large, multinational corporation supported Rogers’ work, concluding that informal communication sources from other employees were more influential on employee attitudes and intentions for adopting innovations than were communication sources. Besides interpersonal influences, characteristics of the innovation itself influence the rate of adoption (Rogers, 1995). Wejnert (2002) also discussed variables that influence rate of adoption including the individual adopter’s familiarity with the innovation, position in social networks, status, socioeconomic characteristics and other

personal traits. Wejnert found that the environment also introduces variables into adoption rate. Societal culture, political conditions, global uniformity and geographical settings are all factors.

The social aspects of diffusion were studied by several technology management researchers. Persaud, Kumar and Kumar (2001) used a questionnaire sent to executives in the research and development labs of 231 multinational corporations. Their research contributed to the literature on personal interaction involved in diffusion. It was found that individuals provide critical linkages across project teams and labs, a necessity for knowledge generation and sharing. The inter-organizational collaboration that they studied allowed for knowledge transfer and fusion of expertise. While creating an analytical framework for studying the diffusion of organizational innovations, Alange, Jacobsson and Jarnehammar (1998) determined that diffusion is a cumulative process. These technology management researchers found that diffusion is dependant on the path of the individual and networks for the transfer of knowledge. In their systematic review of innovation diffusion in service organizations, Greenhalgh, Robert, Macfarlane, Bate, and Kyriakidou (2004) found diffusion connections in the research traditions of communication studies, sociology and inter-organizational studies. Networks, social influence, norms, communication channels, fads and fashions were all found to be influential to adoption decisions.

The social aspect of diffusion is a complex field. It takes time for innovations to completely diffuse within a social system, and organizations go through several phases while implementing innovation. These stages begin with identification and move through experimentation and rationalization before widespread technology transfer occurs (Raho, Belohlav, & Fiedler, 1987). Deffuant, Huet and Amblard (2005) proposed an individual-based model of diffusion. After a systematic study of the model, their research came to the striking conclusion that innovations with high social value and low individual benefit have a greater

chance of succeeding than innovations with low social value and high individual benefit.

Lundvall (1992) found that technological change is gradual and cumulative in nature. Because of this, the interactive learning process and social networks are an important part of transferring information that is tacit, or person embodied. These social ties are important considering Granovetter's (1973) research on the significance of contacts that are distant and infrequent. His findings point out the strength of weak ties when networking outside of a dense core group. Several researchers including Burns and Wholey (1993), Fennell and Warnecke (1988), Robertson and Wind (1983), and Westphal, Gulati, and Shortell (1997) found that inter-organizational networks influence adoption. These researchers found that "cosmopolitan" organizations that are well networked with others are more susceptible to these external influences. The work of these researchers is meant for study by various fields and for application to a variety of scenarios. Although Rogers began researching innovations dealing with agriculture in the 1960's, he now asserts the generalization of his diffusion model applies to any other new idea including the Internet (Rogers, 2004).

#### Technology's Vital Role in Public Relations

The next section will present the literature on technology's role in the field of public relations. Existing research includes insight into the critical role that various innovations play in the modern practice of public relations. Several researchers have studied the use of the World Wide Web by public relations practitioners. Public relations practitioners use the Web for productivity, efficiency, research, evaluation, two-way communication and issues management (Sallot, Porter & Acosta-Azuru, 2004). Esrock and Leichty (2000) found that practitioners are using the Web to address a variety of "publics," a term used by PR practitioners to describe target audiences and stakeholders. Their content analysis of Fortune 500 Websites showed that most corporate Web pages address multiple publics including investors, customers and press.

The research showed that primary and secondary publics are determined by analysis of Web pages (Esrock & Leichty, 2000). Callison (2003) also did a content analysis of Fortune 500 Websites. He found that most Fortune 500 companies do not have dedicated press rooms for the media, and higher ranking companies were more likely to have Web press rooms than lower ranking companies (Callison, 2003). Other researchers have looked into the specifics of Website features and their affect on PR. Kent, Taylor and White (2003) found that the design of an organization's Website affects that organization's response to information requests by stakeholders.

Web logs or blogs are emerging as another online tool. These online diaries have proven useful as tools for communication with publics (Albrycht, 2004). One public relations researcher, Marken (2005), sees blogging as an effective, fast and economic means of two-way communication with audiences. He argues that a corporate executive's blog can provide a powerful strategic and tactical communications tool. Sturaitis (2004) reports that public relations practitioners can use blogs as tools for media relations. She explains the new tactic of pitching messages to bloggers in the same manner that practitioners traditionally pitch to print and broadcast media. Wasserman (2005) sees blogs as a powerful tool for word of mouth marketing. Spreading the word about a product through individuals is a key business use for blogs. Riva (2002) observed that blogs and other forms of computer mediated communication like instant messaging and chats take longer than face-to-face communication and are absent of important communication cues like facial expression, postures and tone of voice. Blogs are also becoming standard in campaign communication. Case studies by Lawson-Borders and Kirk (2005) found that the effective use of blogging is emerging as a tool to pave the way for future campaign communication strategy. Glover (2006) also investigated blogs in political communication. His content analysis showed that the popularity of blogs continues to increase as a campaign tool.

Other PR researchers studied the effects of other technologies on government and democracy. It has been found that public policy dialogue can come about because of the Internet. Heath's (1998) case study on public issues debates between Shell Oil Company, UK and Greenpeace shows the democratizing power of the Web. The research proves that the poor can play a role in world-wide discussion of issues (Heath, 1998). Another study by Hiebert (2005) showed that new communication technologies can promote democracy by allowing public relations practitioners to engage in two-way communication instead of the one-way propaganda techniques of the past (Hiebert, 2005).

Some research shows that maintaining Website effectiveness can be a struggle for PR practitioners. Hill and White (2000) showed that although public relations practitioners perceive the Web as a tool to enhance their organization's image and competitiveness, problems often arise when they are not given sufficient resources to maintain their Websites. Ryan (2003) found additional concerns. His mail survey of 109 professionals showed that most practitioners have the skills needed for effective Web communication. However, they struggle with teaching others the components of good Websites. Training in concepts and technical skills were also shown to be problematic. According to White and Raman, (2000) these problems may stem from a lack of research and evaluation. Their telephone interviews with Website decision makers found that planning for Websites is usually not subject to formal research and evaluation. The researchers found that determining Website effectiveness is usually more of a trial and error process based on intuition and subjective knowledge.

Although communicating effectively online has been a challenge, existing literature gives practitioners practical information that could be used to create better Websites. Hallahan (2001) found that usability research helps practitioners to produce better Websites and develop improved interactive techniques. Naude, Froneman and Atwood (2004) used a study of non-

governmental organizations in South Africa to conclude that public relations skills and an understanding of the two-way symmetrical model of communication would improve communication effectiveness in Websites.

Other online technologies have also proven to help PR practitioners. Heath (1998) found that public relations practitioners successfully use online databases for issues monitoring. Porter, Sallot, Cameron and Shamp (2001) found that use of online databases empowers practitioners. Their 1998 survey of practitioners from an urban area in the southeast showed that this technology gives practitioners more resources to participate in management decision-making; however, results showed that practitioners were still lagging behind in adopting this technology. In a national email survey conducted by Porter and Sallot in 2002, however, practitioners were found to no longer be laggards in the adoption of new technologies (Porter & Sallot 2003).

#### Public Relations and Power

Power is a topic studied by researchers in various fields. In his book, *Managing with Power*, Pfeffer (1992) argued that organizations are fundamentally political entities that are run through political power. He stressed that innovation and change in any area will require the skill to develop power and the willingness to employ it to get things done. Peled (2001) used a variety of case studies, interviews, and content analyses to conclude that the existing power elite in an organization can use technology to expand their power. However, Peled also found that use of technology by those outside of top management diffuses power away from the elite who are running an organization.

Plowman (2005) used interviews and focus groups with public relations managers and other senior managers from a variety of organizations to learn that membership in top management by public relations practitioners depends on the ability of the PR practitioner to employ strategic planning and solve problems for the organization. Accumulation of experience,

expertise and a relationship with the dominant coalition will give practitioners the trust and authority to contribute. Another public relations researcher who focused on the power of the dominant coalition was Motion (2005). This researcher critiqued PR practices that engage stakeholders in participative processes with predetermined outcomes. Motion argued against using PR in a conflict diffusion role solely to maintain power for the dominant coalition.

The idea of a dominant coalition, or top management team holding power in an organization was key to Finkelstein's (1992) power research. Because many PR researchers including Grunig (1992) adhere to the importance of dominant coalitions and top management teams, Finkelstein's strategic management framework of power has been used in public relations research. Finkelstein segments power into specific categories that show influence on organizations. His taxonomy of power dimensions includes structural power, expert power, prestige power and ownership power. Structural power deals with a person's formal position in an organization, usually referring to the employee's title and salary. A promotion can be evidence of structural power. Expert power is experienced when an employee is looked to for strategic direction on issues of concern. Members of the organization see this person as an expert in a certain area. Prestige power deals with the way a social group views an individual's status. Power from prestige often comes from connections to other individuals who are in power. It can also be measured by membership on boards or Ivy League educations. Ownership power is experienced when the formal structure of an organization is bypassed because of an individual's own shareholdings or because of family relationships with those in ownership roles. In a qualitative study by Sallot, Porter and Acosta-Azuru (2004), practitioners' power was measured as it relates to Finkelstein's power taxonomy. The researchers found that the Web is an important part of the work that practitioners do, and it affects their power as practitioners. Coded transcripts from four focus groups found that all dimensions of power, including

structural, expert, prestige and ownership, were enhanced by Web use.

In Porter and Sallot's (2005) national email survey study, practitioners' Web use was compared to their decision-making power in their organizations. Web use was found to be positively related to three of Finkelstein's conceptualizations of power—structural, expert and prestige power. Those who used the Web more frequently for productivity and efficiency, for research and evaluation, and for issues communication were likely to perceive that they were empowered to be promoted, evidence of structural power. Those who used the Web more for productivity and efficiency and for issues communication were more likely to perceive that they were empowered as experts in their organizations, feeling that they had possession of expert power. These practitioners also felt that the Web enhanced how others saw them, giving them prestige power.

#### Public Relations and Diffusion of Innovations

The next section will review the public relations literature that looks at technology from a diffusion of innovations standpoint. Only a small amount of public relations literature acknowledges Rogers or other diffusion of innovations researchers. One study that did cite Rogers explored the adoption of Websites as a crisis communications tool. Taylor and Perry (2005) coded Web pages for organizations' response to crisis situations in a five-point-in-time study. Their study shows that organizational type does not influence the adoption of online technologies for crisis communications. Taylor and Perry's research shows that technology organizations do not have a higher rate of using Websites for crisis communication than other organizations. The results showed that over 54% of the 92 organizations in the sample adopted the Internet into their crisis response. The research concludes that diffusion of the Internet as a crisis communications tool is still evolving.

In Taylor's (2000) case study on a Malaysian governmental PR campaign, diffusion of

innovations was used to describe a networking approach to nation building. The research found that relationships between individuals and between individuals and governments are keys in building national unity. Communication and influence between these interpersonal networks helped to make a “Neighborliness Campaign” successful. Interview data suggested that national unity means that the Malaysian people have to agree to cooperate. The study showed that one of the most important goals of communication campaigns is to encourage people to cooperate with each other regardless of race.

One diffusion study on journalism, a field closely related to public relations, used case studies to find that the diffusion of convergence of newsrooms was seen as a career advantage to those in the journalism field. Singer (2004) found that despite the culture clashes involved in combining print, television, and online media, journalists enjoyed working with colleagues from different backgrounds. The adoption of this innovation was seen as a career booster to those in the field.

#### Technology Use and Practitioner Roles

Links have been found between the roles of public relations practitioners and the particular technologies they use. Porter and Sallot (2003) used a national email survey to explore practitioner roles and Web use. Their findings expanded on the work of previous roles researchers, segmenting practitioners into four roles according to their participation in various types of work activities. Practitioner roles defined by Porter and Sallot include managers, externals, internals and technicians. The study proved that a practitioner’s use of the Web is linked to his or her role and status within an organization. Findings suggested that online research and evaluation is employed more by managers than technicians. Managers also use the Web for issues communication more than internals do. According to the study, managers and internals both use the Web more than technicians for productivity and efficiency. This study also

proved that women have caught up with men in use of new technologies (Porter & Sallot 2003).

### Technology Use Among PR Practitioners Within Various Industry Segments

Just as technology use varies between public relations practitioners in different roles, it has also been found that practitioners within certain industry segments use technology differently. Taylor, Kent and White (2001) found that activist organizations have used effective design and technical skills on the Web to build relationships with stakeholders; however, they are not engaging publics in two-way interactive communication. Findings show that these organizations are less prepared to respond to media needs than to their own organization's members.

The entertainment industry has also been studied as a separate industry segment of PR. One series of case studies by Baker, Geirland, Fisher and Chandler (1999) shows that communication networks can promote creativity in media production. Certain industry segments including animation, post production, and advertising were found to adopt the technology earlier than other segments. Communication networks were found to enhance brainstorming and collaboration. Impacts of the technology included faster work pace and improved quality of work life.

Nonprofit PR is another area that has been studied from a technology standpoint. Kang and Norton (2004) found that practitioners in nonprofit organizations have been proven to effectively use the Web to communicate with publics and disseminate traditional materials. Interactivity, however, is again a struggle with Web communication in these organizations.

Science organizations often employ PR practitioners, and the technology habits of these professionals are the topic of existing research. According to Duke's (2002) random sample survey of practitioners who are members of the National Association of Science Writers, the public relations function is an important part of gaining research funding in technical and science related organizations. The Web and email are popular tools among science oriented public

relations practitioners, and most practitioners believe that the Web has improved their work. Although the value of online tools is known, Duke's survey found that most practitioners assign a low priority to working on their organization's Web site. The study also showed that science journalists in particular rely heavily on the Web in reporting their stories, and media coverage is the reward of strategic email use among science focused practitioners. Later, Dumlao and Duke's (2003) open-ended phone interviews with science writers proved that the Web and email are used to speed information to publics including media representatives. As journalistic work is changing, skepticism grows, and analysis of information quality becomes more important to science writers. Respondents in the study were cautious, but enthusiastic about changes brought about by email and the Web. Kauffman (2001) also studied PR in a science organization. His research shows how NASA benefited when the science agency's image continued to gain support even during a national crisis. Quick response and honesty helped this science organization to maintain positive relationships with stakeholders.

Other research shows technology companies generating PR success. In the case of Intel's Pentium chip, online newsgroups facilitated public relations success (Hearit, 1999). According to Hachigan and Hallahan (2003), technology industry practitioners who use Websites to communicate their messages often gain the attention of the media. Journalists who cover the computer industry look for credibility, reputation and information value when using Websites created by practitioners.

#### Technology Provides Two –Way Communication

The final portion of this literature review will focus on the role of interactivity in communication and technology in the public relations field. Public relations researchers have studied two-way communications for decades. Grunig and Hunt (1984) used case studies across three nations to discover that an interactive, two-way form of communication was a key

component of excellent public relations. They found that in order to build mutually beneficial relationships with key stakeholders, this type of back and forth communication is the best way to address the needs and wants of both parties. Questionnaires, case studies and interviews with top communicators in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom proved that two-way communication was superior to the accepted communication techniques of the past. Grunig and Hunt presented a timeline of communication models to illustrate that public relations has evolved for the better through the years. Their first model shows press agency, the standard way of communication in the earliest years of the profession. This press agency model is a one-way form of communication, which critics say is used to disseminate propaganda to the news media. The second model is the public information model, which represents another type of one-way communication. In this type of communication, information is disseminated from an organization out to its publics, but no information is gathered from the stakeholders involved. The final model of public relations communication is two-way communication, where organizations not only communicate messages to their stakeholders, but they also actively seek information from those publics with a role in the organization's success or failure. The modern practice of public relations is known as the two-way symmetrical model for communication. This two-way symmetrical model emphasizes mutual understanding and collaboration between an organization and its publics. Grunig's (1992) theories suggest that only the two-way symmetrical model represents a break from the view that public relations is a way to manipulate publics for the benefit of the organization. The two-way symmetrical model is meant to show how organizations should practice public relations to be most ethical and effective.

Interactivity and Grunig's ideal two-way manner of communicating is a topic that has sparked many studies on technology use in public relations. Interactivity was the focus of McMillan's (1999) work. McMillan performed a content analysis and survey of 834 random

health-related Websites to find that non-profit and governmental health related sites were more likely to use interactivity on their Websites than for-profit corporations. Some researchers, like DiNardo (2002) have found that practitioners are unable to achieve proper two-way communication. DiNardo's case studies of banking organizations preparing for Y2K showed that interactivity and two-way communication is often insufficient during times of crisis management. Since interactivity should be a major benefit of online communication, researchers have pondered how to best use the Internet to achieve this type of communication. Kang and Norton (2004) found that in order to accomplish reciprocal two-way communication, organizations should integrate relational elements into their Websites. Interactive Web content like feedback, email, and easy connectivity with other content is also increasingly important (Jo & Kim, 2003). Jo and Kim (2003) learned the specifics on how to use online interactivity and two-way communication properly. Their experiment with 197 participants showed that interactivity and multimedia orientation on the Web have significant effects on reputation and relationship building between an organization and its publics. The researchers found that relationship management was more about trust and cooperation than technological gimmicks or showing off the innovativeness of an organization.

## **CHAPTER THREE: HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

## Hypotheses

The following hypotheses emerge from the literature review.

Influence and communication determine how innovations move from a source to an adopter (Rogers, 1995). Public relations practitioners, like all technology adopters, are influenced by their peers when it comes to adoption of new technologies. Several researchers including Burns and Wholey (1993), Fennell and Warnecke (1988), Robertson and Wind (1983), and Westphal, Gulati, and Shortell (1997) found that inter-organizational networks do influence adoption. These influences from innovative individuals affect PR practitioners in the same ways that they would affect anyone else. Those practitioners who interact frequently with innovators are likely to be exposed to technologies that haven't yet been adopted by the majority of a population. Opinion leaders influence others' attitudes and intentions relating to innovations (Rogers, 1983); therefore, innovators who have direct interaction with public relations practitioners are likely to influence the adoption intentions of these public relations practitioners. Rogers (1995) found that early adopters of new technologies often act as change agents influencing others to try innovations. PR practitioners who have close proximity to these early adopters of new technologies are likely to be influenced by these change agents and innovative individuals. Since interconnectedness of an individual in a social system is positively related to the individual's innovativeness (Rogers, 1983), those PR practitioners who are interconnected to a social system of innovators are more likely to become more innovative themselves and adopt technology before the majority of people.

Therefore,

H1: Public relations practitioners with close proximity to innovators are more likely to be early adopters of new technologies.

Several measures of interconnectedness determine innovativeness with regard to adopting

new technologies. Some of these measures include attendance at meetings, being on staff in a certain type of organization, and sharing an office with an individual (Rogers, 1983). PR practitioners working in technology organizations are likely to have these types of office interactions with innovative people in their workplace. Weening (1999) found that informal communication sources from colleagues within one's organization are more influential on attitudes and intentions for adopting innovations than more formal communication sources are about those innovations (Weening, 1999). This environmental impact applies across all fields, including public relations. PR people who work in a technology organization are more likely to develop informal relationships with innovative individuals than are PR people who don't work in technology organizations. These informal communications between colleagues are highly influential when it comes to the adoption of new technologies. It has also been found that certain industry segments of media production people including animation, post production, and advertising specialists are more likely to be early adopters of new technologies for collaboration (Baker, Geirland, Fisher & Chandler, 1999). The communications professionals in these high-tech environments adopt early because of their workplace interactions and the technology-rich organizational culture. Since other media industries have shown that employees with close proximity to innovators adopt technology early, it should be true in the high-tech areas of public relations.

Therefore,

H2: Public relations practitioners in technology organizations are more likely to be early adopters of new technologies.

Rogers showed that social networks are the primary means to spread a technology through interpersonal channels, and his research proved that close proximity to innovators encourages technology adoption (Rogers, 2004). Greenhalgh, Robert, Macfarlane, Bate, and

Kyriakidou (2004) found that networks, social influence, norms, communication channels, fads and fashions were all found to be influential to adoption decisions. Because of these influential social factors, public relations practitioners who have close proximity to innovators will adopt technology early. Sallot, Porter and Acosta-Alzuru (2004) proved that practitioners who adopt certain technologies will benefit by experiencing prestige power, the ability to influence others using status in an organization. Issues management via the Web was proven to enhance practitioners' prestige power. Prestige power was also increased due to the control that practitioners have over the Web. Practitioners with close proximity to innovators will adopt technologies early, and those practitioners who use technology have seen increases in their own prestige power.

Therefore,

H3: Public relations practitioners with close proximity to innovators are more likely to perceive that they have prestige power.

Social networks diffuse innovations, and the closer an individual is linked to innovative members of that social group, the more likely they are to adopt technology early. Rogers (2004) found that members of social networks that are closest to innovators will be early adopters of technologies. Rogers also encouraged the generalization of his model to modern technologies like the Web. PR researchers have found that adoption of technology such as the Web can facilitate expert power, the influence that comes from special expertise. Sallot, Porter and Acosta-Alzuru (2004) found that the use of the Web is a standard operating procedure for public relations practitioners. Laser targeting of publics, the ability to evaluate Web activity, issues management via the Web, and improved media relations via the Web were all found to enhance expert power. These researchers found that expert power is also increased since public relations practitioners control the Web (Sallot, Porter & Acosta-Alzuru, 2004). Since researchers in

public relations have found that technology use can yield expert power, and since individuals in close proximity to innovators adopt technology more easily, it should hold true that those practitioners who are closest to innovators will adopt technology that will make them more likely to perceive that they have expert power.

Therefore,

H4: Public relations practitioners with close proximity to innovators are more likely to perceive that they have expert power.

Individuals with close proximity to innovators are more likely to use technologies more frequently (Rogers, 1983). Technologies like Web usage among PR practitioners was found to increase structural power, the influence that comes with a person's position in an organization. Porter and Sallot's (2005) national e-mail survey found that practitioners who use the Web more frequently for productivity and efficiency, for research and evaluation, and for issues communication are most likely to perceive that the Web empowered them to be promoted. These practitioners perceived that they had structural power (Porter & Sallot, 2005). Practitioners who have close proximity to innovators are more likely to use technologies like the Web, and practitioners who are more likely to use the Web are also more likely to perceive that they have structural power.

Therefore,

H5: Public relations practitioners with close proximity to innovators are more likely to perceive that they have structural power.

Several public relations researchers have found that technologies like the Web are useful for interactivity and two-way communication. Sallot, Porter and Acosta Azuru (2004) found that public relations practitioners use the Web for two-way communication. Researchers have found that technology is helpful in the area of interactive communication with regard to Web content

like feedback, email, and connectivity with other content (Jo & Kim, 2003). Naude, Froneman and Atwood (2004) found more correlations between adoption of technology and two-way communication. They proved that understanding of the two-way symmetrical model of communication improves communication effectiveness in Websites. Hallahan (2001) found that usability research can help practitioners to produce better Websites and develop improved interactive techniques, and Hiebert (2005) proved that new communication technologies do allow public relations practitioners to engage in two-way communication. The literature shows several direct links between the adoption of technology and the increased opportunity to engage in two-way communication. Public relations practitioners who adopt these interactive technologies early will have more opportunities for this type of two-way communication.

Therefore,

H6: Public relations practitioners who are early adopters of new technologies are more likely to engage in two-way communication.

#### Research Questions

In addition, the following research questions will be explored:

RQ1: Are PR practitioners in technology organizations more likely than PR practitioners in other industries to influence adoption in others?

RQ2: How does adoption rate differ among practitioners in different roles?

## **CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY**

To explore whether proximity to innovation is related to various career factors among PR practitioners, two separate hour-long focus groups as well as seven hour-long individual in-depth interviews with practitioners were held.

#### Recruiting Participants from Two Separate Backgrounds

PR practitioners were recruited from two distinct organizational types. One group of participants included practitioners working in extremely high-tech and technology-rich environments. These practitioners had very close proximity to innovators. A second group of participants were recruited from a more general community of PR practitioners. These individuals were working in environments that were less technology-rich. The practitioners in this low-tech group worked in environments that offered very limited proximity to the 2.5 percent of the population that Rogers labels as innovators.

The high-tech sample was recruited from a group of PR practitioners attending a high performance computing conference in Seattle, Washington, in November of 2005. They were invited via email to attend a public relations focus group held during the technology conference. Through three emails sent to the conference's public relations mailing list, practitioners were recruited and registered to attend the high-tech PR focus group. Those who couldn't attend the focus group were invited to participate in private interviews for use in the research project. Beginning five weeks before the conference, the first email was sent to the PR mailing list with minimal response. The second email, sent two weeks before the conference, achieved nine participants, and the final email sent two days before the conference helped to confirm participation of ten total practitioners attending either the focus group or separate interviews. Flyers were also distributed at the conference to recruit practitioners in attendance. Five participants in total attended the high-tech PR focus group, and five additional high-tech practitioners were individually interviewed from the group of practitioners working in the high

performance computing industry. These practitioners were offered an opportunity to win a free iPod mp3 player as an incentive to participate. Appendix B shows the three emails sent to the high-tech practitioners for recruiting their participation. The flyer used at the conference to recruit practitioners is shown in appendix C.

The researcher classified the group from the high performance computing conference as “high-tech” practitioners. The practitioners in the high-tech sampling were all currently working in environments that they considered as innovative and technology-rich. They also all saw themselves as having a close proximity to innovators. This study will use the term “high-tech” practitioners to refer to this group of participants. The roles of the practitioners in the group varied. In order to determine how roles influence adoption rate, the researcher classified the participants into one of four roles based on the regular job duties and titles of participants in the study. The roles used were defined by previous literature of Porter and Sallot (2003). Four of the participants were classified as managers, two were technicians, two were externals, and two were internals. The ages of participants also varied. Four participants were between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five. Two participants were between the ages of thirty-five and forty-five, and four participants were between the ages of forty-five and fifty-five.

The low-tech sampling of practitioners also contained ten participants. These individuals were recruited from an email sent to a public relations mailing list for a state university in the southeastern United States. Appendix D shows the email sent to recruit these practitioners. The participation incentive offered to this group was a complimentary lunch for all attending. Outside of the focus group setting, two of the practitioners in this group participated in one-on-one interviews. The researcher classified the group from the university mailing list as “low-tech” practitioners. The ten total individuals in the low-tech group were all currently working in environments that they labeled as limited in terms of innovation. These practitioners also

believed that they had limited proximity to innovators. This study will use the term “low-tech” practitioners to refer to this group of participants. The roles of the practitioners in this group varied. Three of the participants were managers, three were technicians, two were externals, and two were internals. The ages of participants also varied. Five participants were between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five. One participant was between thirty-five and forty-five, and four participants were between the ages of forty-five and fifty-five.

When comparing the ages and roles of the two groups, one will find that participants in the high-tech group were slightly older overall and had slightly more management experience than the participants in the low-tech group of this study. Gender was more evenly distributed between the two groups with both the high-tech group and the low-tech group containing four male participants and six female participants. Practitioners’ areas of expertise varied in both samples. Their job specialties included titles such as graphic designer, media relations specialist, marketing research specialist, communication manager, digital media director, government affairs director, marketing coordinator, editor, science writer, technical writer, public affairs director, and freelance consultant.

A moderator’s guide led discussions for both the focus groups and the interviews. The moderator’s guide for this study is available at appendix E. The researcher facilitated all focus groups and interviews. At the start of each focus group and interview, the practitioners were shown Roger’s adoption chart, available in appendix A. They were asked to refer to the specific areas of the chart when comparing adoption habits of individuals during the discussions. Near the close of all interviews and focus groups, each practitioner was asked to indicate where they believed they fell on the adoption chart. They were also asked to indicate where they felt the general public relations practitioner community should be labeled on the chart. Appendix F shows an example of one of the adoption charts marked with an interviewee’s perspectives on

his own adoption rate as well as the adoption rate that he attributed to the general public relations practitioner community. Digital video footage of focus groups and digital audio recordings of in-depth interviews were all transcribed by the researcher. See appendix K for the transcriptions. Extensive notes were taken in all interviews and focus groups as well.

### Assumptions

For the purposes of this research study several assumptions were made in order to narrow the focus for data collection and analysis. The study assumes a self-referential approach. In the interviews and focus groups, people were asked to give their own views of themselves regarding their own innovativeness and their own adoption habits. Participants also gave their views on the innovativeness and adoption habits of the public relations field, of which they are a part. Because of this self-referential approach to the data, the findings are based only on the perceptions of the individuals participating in the study. The study also takes a behavioral approach to diffusion of innovation. For the purposes of this study the term “adoption” is defined as the use of a technology within the field of public relations. This definition assumes a behavioral approach to the subject of adoption because the research is only concerned with the behavior of using the technologies. The study does not attempt to discover knowledge about the other parts of the adoption process such as the feelings associated with the technologies, or the willingness to switch to a new technology. Also, a positivist approach is assumed for the purposes of this study. Six hypotheses and two research questions were drafted to guide the research before any data collection began. Going into the data collection and analysis, the researcher had a clear picture of the questions that the study set out to answer. This approach gave a systematic structure to the research method, and narrowed the focus of the study.

## Coding Techniques

The transcripts from the focus groups and interviews were all coded using Strauss and Corbin's (1994) grounded theory techniques as a guide for the research analysis. The purpose of this qualitative coding process is to minimize any preconceptions or biases held by the researcher. The coding method is meant to draw out recurrent themes in the data, so that dominant ideas will emerge from the transcripts. The various steps in the coding process allow a researcher to find the recurrent themes in the data. The redundancies in themes emerging from the data become the findings for the study.

To begin the coding process, the transcripts were first marked by open coding. This open coding technique involved the identification of the most basic concepts in the data. Microsoft Word's yellow highlighter tool was used to break the respondents' answers down to their smallest fundamental properties. This process was key in identifying all of the phenomena to later categorize during the axial coding process. The results of this process separate the respondents' answers from the other parts of the transcripts. It also groups small sections of words together into tiny chunks of meaning. An example of the end result of the open coding process for one of the transcripts can be found in appendix G.

Once all of the open coding was complete, the axial coding process was used to break the data into slightly bigger pieces. The small categories of meaning grouped together in the open coding process were next grouped into larger categories according to the various points made within the respondents' answers. This axial coding process is meant to find common concepts emerging from the data. Comparisons, commonalities, key concepts and dominant themes were color coded for investigation. This color-coding technique also took advantage of Microsoft Word's highlighter tool, this time creating 44 different color-coded categories. The color key for this axial coding process can be found in appendix H.

Categories for color-coding were first created from the preexisting hypotheses. H1 states, “Public relations practitioners with close proximity to innovators are more likely to be early adopters of new technologies.” One category formed to collect data relating to H1 included the groups of information color-coded to indicate instances of interaction with innovators resulting in the adoption of new technologies. For example, responses supporting this specific phenomenon were coded with yellow text and a teal highlighter. Other information that was also color coded to test the same hypotheses would include any instances of proximity to innovators *not* resulting in the adoption of new technologies. Any responses of this type were highlighted in teal with rose-colored text.

Besides this method of creating categories from hypotheses, categories for axial coding were also created based on the research questions proposed by the study. For example, RQ1 states, “Are PR practitioners in technology organizations more likely than PR practitioners in other industries to influence adoption in others?” This research question led to the creation of two axial coding categories. Those instances showing practitioners in technology organizations influencing others were highlighted in fifty percent grey with rose-colored text. Those instances showing practitioners in technology organizations *not* influencing others were coded in fifty percent grey with light green text.

New categories also emerged from consistent themes appearing in participants’ responses. These categories weren’t driven by hypotheses or research questions; however, they remain important to the study. An example of a color-coded category that emerged from the participants’ responses alone was the consistent theme of participants who felt that they were “forced” to adopt new technologies in their workplaces. This phenomenon was not predicted by a hypothesis; however, its recurrence in the data earned it a category. Responses explaining such situations where practitioners were “forced” to adopt were coded with white text and a pink

highlighter. An excerpt from a transcript after being color-coded by this axial coding process can be found in appendix I. The color key can be found in appendix H.

The final coding method used in this study was selective coding. During this procedure, dominant themes were discovered. These dominant portions were underscored for emphasis. Data found to be insignificant, such as jokes or irrelevant conversations, were removed from the data using the strikethrough font feature in Microsoft Word. Supporting statements that illustrated major recurring themes were italicized. An example of the selective coding process can be found in appendix J.

All data used in this study was collected between October 13, 2005, and January 20, 2006. As soon as the interviews and focus groups for data collection began, the typing of transcriptions and coding process also began. Data continued to be collected through interviews and focus groups until the major themes emerging from the coding process became predictable and redundant. Once the major themes continued to emerge again and again in the coding process and insight into the research questions and hypotheses became redundant, the data collection process was complete. After the coding process was finalized, the names of all participants, their places of employment, and any other individuals mentioned by name in the transcripts were changed to ensure confidentiality.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS**

Several themes emerged repeatedly during the coding process. Since the moderator's guide included questions directly addressing the hypotheses and research questions of the study, respondents' answers during interviews and focus groups yielded much insight into those specific topics. In analyzing the coded data to find results, each hypothesis and research question was systematically tested.

### Results from Hypotheses

#### Practitioners with Close Proximity to Innovators Adopt Technology Early

H1 stated, "Public relations practitioners with close proximity to innovators are more likely to be early adopters of new technologies." To test this hypothesis, those transcriptions coded with markings for close proximity to innovators were checked for coding indicating early adoption rates for new technologies. Analysis showed that proximity to innovators did encourage technology adoption among the PR professionals interviewed. Nearly all practitioners working in very high-tech environments who had close proximity to innovators tended to adopt technology earlier than those who had very limited proximity to innovators. Joey, a young practitioner just starting his career in the high-tech industry, believes that the innovators he works with are influencing him and change is occurring.

I definitely think since you're in an environment that's so innovative naturally, I think it definitely makes you more prone to want to use the latest technologies. I put myself ahead of PR practitioners in general just because of the people I work with because I think you become a product of that environment. Coming into it you may not be very innovative inherently, but you learn to think like an innovator. At least I have, because when you work for a firm that's highly technical, they become one of your publics.

...You have to know how to communicate with your publics to be able to anticipate their needs and anticipate their responses. You become that. You have to learn how to do

that, and the only way to be able to do that is to think like an innovator. In doing so you become an innovator yourself.

Tracey trusts the innovators at her workplace to keep her informed about the latest technologies available. She has very close proximity to innovators in her high-tech PR job, and she tends to adopt technology early. She admits that she is very influenced by her informal working relationship with these technology innovators.

A lot of the techy guys I know at (unnamed high-tech organization) are innovators. It breeds a certain laziness in me because I can rely on them to know the newest and coolest thing in technology, computers, cell phones. Then sometimes it's like they are speaking a different language and they'll just bottom line it for me. They tell me what I need and I trust them completely. These people have a proven track record with me. They fix my computer when it's broken. I would get their seal of approval before I bought anything really techy. If I hadn't worked with these techy guys I wouldn't know anything about this self-editing Web browser. If I didn't work at (unnamed high-tech organization), I wouldn't know what Access Grid was. I wouldn't think of using video conferencing to help me with my job. I wouldn't know about documents that can be editable by a whole group of people.

Matthew thinks the exposure to technology at his workplace gives him an advantage over other practitioners. He, like the others mentioned, works with innovative people in an innovative environment. The proximity to innovators that he experiences has caused him to adopt technology early. Matthew believes that this proximity to innovators is giving him a career benefit that most practitioners don't have.

When you're a PR person working for technology companies that are technically literate, you have to be right up there with them. So absolutely. I think I'm ahead of the rest of the PR

field because of my exposure to technology. I think people in the technology field have a leg up in terms of accessing information, research.

H1 was supported by the data. Practitioners in the study with close proximity to innovators did tend to adopt technology early. The practitioners in the high-tech group interacted frequently with individuals who influenced their technology use. Nearly all of the practitioners in the high-tech sample of this study gave examples of early adoption due to their proximity to innovators.

#### Practitioners in Technology Organizations Adopt Technology Early

H2 stated, “Public relations practitioners in technology organizations are more likely to be early adopters of new technologies.” To test this hypothesis, the researcher compared coding for the influences from practitioners’ organizational environments to the categories marked for early adoption of technologies. Most of the high-tech practitioners in this study saw themselves as adopting technology before the majority of the general public and before the majority of the general public relations practitioner community. These high-tech practitioners tended to place themselves in either the early adopter category or the early majority category. Matthew, a practitioner working in a technology organization shares why he is an early adopter. “I think in general, PR people are late to adopt,” said Matthew. “I adopt early because it is second nature in my industry. It’s helped me to keep up and be innovative in my work.” Katie also works in a technology organization. She adopts early and believes that she is ahead of the general practitioner community with her adoption decisions.

I’d be right here (pointing to the early adopter category). I’d be an early adopter. I think they’d be in the late majority. They’d be right here (pointing to the late majority category) comparatively speaking. In other organizations there’s more of a status quo kind of culture where they use things that have worked before. There’s usually no incentive to be innovative, so I mean if you’re doing the job and you’re, I mean just from

the conversations that I've had with other people in other fields that do communications, it just seems like they stick with your basic email or electronic versions of communications.

Joe works in a technology organization and he considers himself to be an early adopter relative to the majority of the general population. Although Joe doesn't see himself as innovative compared to the high-tech experts at his job, he thinks he is ahead of the practitioner community. "I may be a laggard compared to the innovators I work with," said Joe, "but among the communications group I'm way ahead."

Comparatively speaking, all of the practitioners interviewed who work for low-tech organizations believed that their own adoption habits were either just before the majority of the general public or just after the majority of the general public. These practitioners were split evenly with half of the group placing themselves in Rogers' early majority category and half of the group placing themselves in Rogers' late majority category. None of these practitioners outside of technology organizations saw themselves as innovators, or early adopters. Some practitioners mentioned that they felt like laggards at times, but none of the PR practitioners in this study actually placed themselves in the laggard category when asked to point out the specific category they best fit. Roy, a practitioner working in a low-tech organization explains why he sees himself as a member of the late majority.

I would say late majority. But I'm trying to push to be ahead of that. I think no matter what, we'll end up being late majority. But that's not that bad. At least we're not laggards. You know, in a lot of ways I think I'm a laggard. Like in my personal life, I was the last person I know to buy a DVD player. When I told people that I bought it, they were like, "You didn't have a DVD player?" But I didn't have this burning need for

it. I like to look at the new technology, but I don't really need it. Like with TVs. The new flat screen plasmas are nice; I like them. But I'm not going to get one.

Many of the high-tech practitioners interviewed believed that their innovative workplaces supported a culture of technology use. They especially found it easy to get technology purchases approved by superiors. Because it was easy for these practitioners working in technology organizations to acquire these high-tech tools, they tended to be earlier to adopt. Ivan believes that he can have access to any of the latest technology tools that he might need for his job. He works as a graphic designer and public relations person in a highly innovative environment. He tends to adopt technologies for his work extremely early.

They're buying my equipment. So generally, they come by once a year and ask if I need anything, and I'll say yes or no. At work they have the funds to keep me using the latest and greatest stuff.

Fawn's working environment also supports technology use. The technology organization that she works for has approved every high-tech expense she has ever asked for. She believes that her boss already understands the value of technology, and this causes her to be an early adopter.

When I go to my director and ask him for things that involve technology, usually the answer is yes, pretty quickly. This is because they know the importance of technology. In other companies I've worked for I'll ask for something high-tech that I need to do my job better, and they'll say "No. Do you really need that?" And I'll say, "Yes. And here's my business case. Here's what I can accomplish; here's how I can be more successful." And I get, "No. I don't think we need that right now." At the place I'm working at now, everything I've asked for, I've gotten, and that's pretty cool.

Joe also sees the benefits of working in a high-tech office environment. Because of the high-tech organization that he works for, Joe adopts early as well. He concurs that purchases for technology are easily approved in an organization like his. Joe describes what it is like to be immersed in an organizational culture that supports technology.

We're in a weird culture because we're around these innovators and early adopters. We don't even realize the technology after a while, because that's just our way of doing business. I think now we've gotten used to people working on laptops and everybody carrying everything around. And I think it's sort of the innovative culture more than the innovative people. I think we all work in places that really encourage innovation, and if somebody wants to go buy a new little thing like a digital camera, they'll say ok, yeah. You can get that. The big wigs will approve that expenditure because they are already innovators and they'll give it a green light.

Those working in very low-tech environments tended to have limited proximity to innovators. Their workplaces didn't support technology usage, and purchases of technology were harder to have approved. Because it was difficult for practitioners to acquire high-tech tools, they tended to be later to adopt. Jessica gets frustrated with the limited resources available in her low-tech office environment. She is a graphic designer and PR coordinator who wants to adopt early but feels held back by her organization. "I just feel we're behind in the resources," said Jessica. "If we wanted to do a campaign that was very innovative and technology savvy, we don't have enough people here."

Greg believes that he lags behind in technology adoption because of his lack of exposure to technology innovators. His low-tech organization doesn't support the early adoption of technologies; therefore, he adopts most high-tech tools late or not at all. The close proximity to

innovators that encourages other practitioners in high-tech organizations to adopt early is missing from Greg's PR job.

I tend to think I may be a laggard. I have thought I'm a laggard because I'm not near the electronic innovation. Most of the technology is electronically based and digitally based. I'm not near anyone who thinks about those things or invents those things or has shown me those things.

H2 was supported by the data. Findings suggest that practitioners working in technology organizations are more likely early adopters than practitioners working in low-tech organizations. The data suggests that this phenomenon is due to the close proximity to innovators found in technology organizations as well as the high-tech organizational culture in support of using financial resources for technology.

Practitioners in the Study with Close Proximity to Innovators  
Did Not Perceive That They Had Prestige Power

H3 stated, "Public relations practitioners with close proximity to innovators are more likely to perceive that they have prestige power." In testing H3, coding marks for practitioners' proximity to innovators was compared with the coding marks for those practitioners giving examples of times when they experienced feelings of prestige power. Practitioners in high-tech environments who had close proximity to innovators did not demonstrate specific support showing that they experienced prestige power. Some showed examples of feeling prestigious, but prestige power as it relates to this study is usually associated with membership on boards, Ivy League educations, or other prestigious symbols of status. Although many of the practitioners with close proximity to innovators felt prestigious in other ways, prestige power was not demonstrated.

Ivan works in a technology-rich environment and has very close proximity to innovators. He believes that he feels prestige and respect from the innovators at his job. Although the technology experts that he works with view most PR practitioners in the organization as “fluff,” Ivan believes that they see him as more of an equal.

They look at me as less fluff because I have adopted some of their technologies. As soon as I started doing that, they started saying, “He’s pretty cool. He does know what he’s talking about.”

Katie also works in an environment that gives her close proximity to innovators. She has a feeling of prestige because she is seen as an important part of her technology organization. She believes that practitioners outside of the high-tech field have less prestige power and authority.

I’m an integral part of this microcosm that allows me to have a greater say in the organization in terms of promotions or what we do for publicity. So I don’t think that other practitioners get that level of authority.

Although these practitioners mentioned their feelings of high status within their organizations, no practitioners in the study mentioned membership on boards, Ivy League educations, or any other symbols of status.

H3 is not supported by this study. Practitioners in this study with close proximity to innovators were not more likely than practitioners in the study with limited proximity to innovators to give examples of prestige power experienced on the job.

#### Practitioners with Close Proximity to Innovators Have Expert Power

H4 stated, “Public relations practitioners with close proximity to innovators are more likely to perceive that they have expert power.” To test this hypothesis, those practitioners coded for close proximity to innovators were checked for instances of coding for expert power. Every high-tech practitioner interviewed in this study mentioned experiencing some form of expert

power due to close proximity to innovators. Joey enjoys the feeling of power he gets from working with innovators. He believes that his high-tech PR job keeps him ahead of public relations practitioners working in other fields.

Adopting technology can set you apart from these practitioners that don't adopt, or are late to adopt. You are viewed as having information power. Because you work with these innovators, people definitely see you as having information power in knowing what's the latest thing, what's the coolest thing.

Ivan uses his expert power to defend his technology choices with his own IT department's gatekeepers. He feels that his own technology expertise gives him more power within his high-tech organization than "just a PR person" would have. Since Ivan has close proximity to innovators, he has a better understanding of the technology.

When I go to Bob and I say, "I want to use this spamming tool" or whatever. He can't tell me that I can't use it because it doesn't exist. If I know it exists there's no way he can stop me. If you have a good idea and you can find the solution, that's the thing, I'll actually just go out and find a solution and say, this is exactly the type of program we want. ... You know, he only listens to me because ... he knows that I have an understanding of the technology and what it would take to make it happen. If I was just a PR person, he wouldn't care.

Outside of his high-tech PR job, Ivan works as a commissioner serving the public with his communications and technology skills. He is the chair of the public relations committee, and he has created a Website to communicate with the public in his city. Because of his high-tech PR job, he has learned skills that give him expert power in his role as commissioner. He uses this power to distinguish him from the other commissioners, to maintain control and to experience more favorable outcomes.

What it boils down to is that I have control over (the Website.) So I know that's power. They don't even want to question it, because they don't want it to disappear because the city thinks it's really great. They say, "you guys are doing a great job," so when they start talking about slowing down something, I start talking about, you know, "Why am I the Webmaster?" and then they go, "Oh, let's go ahead and push that through, Ivan." That's important to me, because if I didn't have that, I would be just like any other commissioner and that would suck. So in the end, it does help me to push things through.

H4 was supported by this study. The practitioners in the high-tech sample, having close proximity to innovators gave consistent examples of how their own technology expertise gave them expert power in various situations within their employment organizations and within their communities.

#### Practitioners with Close Proximity to Innovators Have Structural Power

H5 stated, "Public relations practitioners with close proximity to innovators are more likely to perceive that they have structural power." When testing hypothesis five, the researcher compared practitioners coded for close proximity to innovators with code markings indicating the possession of structural power. Practitioners with limited proximity to innovators were also studied for any indications of structural power. Several practitioners with close proximity to innovators communicated examples of their own structural power. Practitioners in the study with limited proximity to innovators gave examples of people that they knew who had structural power because of their knowledge of technology.

Kathy is a practitioner with very close proximity to innovators. She works with them daily to promote her high-tech organization. After serving on a high-profile technology communications committee, she recently accepted a new high-tech PR job with greater structural

power. Kathy explains the career benefits of being a part of this type of technology-rich environment.

I got two job offers just from being in that position. Just from having people see me.

The one that I recently accepted was partly from that experience. It also gave my boss a chance to see me outside of my regular environment. I would agree with Joe in general that there are better career opportunities for those of us in the high-tech PR world.

Tracey works in the technology sector as well. She watched one of her public relations colleagues with close proximity to innovators gain structural power in her organization and move up the chain of command. She ponders whether his knowledge of the jargon and terminology used by the innovators running the organization helped him to gain this structural power.

The guy who is head of all of operations now used to be in my position. He used to do media relations, then he was the head of public affairs, and now he's over the whole thing. I wonder if that was a factor. Knowing the jargon and terminology could've made him more successful. There's an importance placed on PR at (unnamed high-tech organization). It's seen as a key part of the organization.

Roy works in a low-tech environment and has limited proximity to innovators, but he, also, sees structural power benefits for those individuals in his organization that are early to adopt technology. He gives an example of a promotion given to someone in his organization because her innovative skill set.

If you look at our office, I think that Leslie had an advantage when Raymond came in because of her Web skills. He wanted to use the Web a lot. So I think that worked for her advantage. I mean, I don't know, I like her, too. Don't get me wrong, but I think that had something to do with it. I think that he was all excited about the Web and stuff, and she was in charge of that area. He wanted to restructure things, and I think it had

everything to do with it. I think that's probably something that worked to her advantage. He had ideas for the department and he thought the Web was going to be key to that. He saw that she was the one with the knowledge in that area. It was because he had an infatuation with a particular type of technology.

Greg, who works in a low-tech organization, also feels that technology is something that can help a person to get promoted. He doesn't have close proximity to innovators, and he tends to lag behind the majority with adoption of technology. Greg can only think of hypothetical scenarios to explain his belief that technology use can give someone structural power.

A great deal of value within any organization comes if you can prompt action within a lot of people. You know, I can prompt a lot of people to buy this product. If I can prompt more people to buy this product than Joe, I'm going to get promoted. Well, I can hit a lot more people a lot more frequently and a lot easier with email than with a letter, so if I can learn how to harness the power of email and learn how to make it work for me and maybe create a little viral marketing, which we don't use here, suddenly, maybe I'm generating a whole bunch of sales that I couldn't do with a printing press and an envelope and a stamp. So in that instance, it's always harnessing the technology to promote value, and technology can let you reach more people cheaper.

H5 was supported by the data. Among the study participants, most of the practitioners with close proximity to innovators did give examples of times when they experienced structural power within their organization. Practitioners without close proximity to innovators tended to adopt technology a bit later, and they didn't have examples of experiencing structural power from their own technology use. These low-tech practitioners tended to give examples of other people's gaining structural power from technology. They also explained hypothetical situations of structural power gained from technology use.

It Remains Unknown Whether Practitioners Who Adopt Early  
Are More Likely to Use Two-Way Communication

H6 stated, “Public relations practitioners who are early adopters of new technologies are more likely to engage in two-way communication.” To test for this hypothesis, transcripts for practitioners coded as early adopters and transcripts for practitioners coded as late adopters were analyzed for differences in their likelihood to use two-way communication.

Joey is an early adopter of technology. He mentioned interactive two-way communication tools that he uses to collaborate on projects.

Well, I was talking about CVS and Access Grids before, they allow people who are not necessarily close in proximity to interact with each other, and get that – what I feel is - important face-to-face interaction for meetings on projects or anything like that. So you gather these people together and allow them to have face-to-face communication, or screen-to-screen, I guess. You’re enabling them to be interactive. You’re enabling them to communicate with each other in a way that isn’t possible necessarily through email or through telephone even.

Ivan, who adopts early, mentioned how enabling interactivity and two-way communication was part of his high-tech PR job. He creates the graphics that will later become part of a new two-way communication tool.

Part of my job is also to just design things and let other people make them interactive, like interactive touch panel devices and things, so for that stuff I use Photoshop and I send raw files to someone who then uses Macromedia Director to make all that stuff interactive.

Tracey, an early adopter, talked about communication through interactivity and multimedia; her high-tech job often deals with creative opportunities for communicating.

We have all these opportunities with multimedia now and we have an opportunity to get the message out even without the media. Through the Web we even do video presentations and interactive flash presentations. It helps me to get to be a little more creative in our little niche area of PR. We're a very small group of people.

Greg, who is a late adopter of technology, was asked about the technology tools that he uses in his PR job. His first response of a technology used for his work was, "printed newsletters." Knowing that this form of communication could be viewed as old-fashioned, Greg acknowledged that he realized that printed newsletters are only a one-way communication tool. "(Printed newsletters are) tried and true," said Greg. "They're easy to produce and distribute as a one-way communication tool. The problem is, it's only one-way."

Although much of the data did suggest that H6 could be valid, results were not completely clear. Some signs, listed above, pointed in the direction of two-way communication being more common among early adopters, but not enough support was found in this study to prove the theory. For example, some late adopters, like Greg, were also using some interactivity and two-way communication tools to enhance the more traditional one-way methods. As Greg lists the technologies he is using in his low-tech PR job, some interactive tools do come up. "We use a Website that's interactive," he said, "... an interactive CD."

Neither the high-tech nor low-tech practitioners in the study referred to their interactive communication methods as "two-way" communication. They implied that these tools would offer a back and forth communication tool, creating a way to disseminate information and get feedback simultaneously; however, they didn't specifically use the term, "two-way" communication.

H6 was not supported by the data. Although many early adopters in the study gave examples of interactivity used, some low-tech practitioners mentioned interactive tools as well.

Since the data gives unclear findings, H6 is left unsupported.

### Results from Research Questions

#### High-Tech Practitioners Influence Adoption in Low-Tech Practitioners

RQ1 stated, “Are PR practitioners in technology organizations more likely than PR practitioners in other industries to influence adoption in others?” This question explores a specific type of expert power, determining the influence of high-tech practitioners among their peers in the general PR field. The influence of high-tech practitioners on other practitioners was coded in distinct colors to test for this research question. Those instances of technology savvy practitioners influencing other practitioners as well as instances of tech-savvy practitioners *not* influencing other practitioners were coded throughout the transcripts.

Jessica works in a low-tech environment. She says she enjoys spending time with high-tech PR people at the various conferences that she attends. The people she meets there are working in more innovative environments, and they influence her adoption of new technologies.

I know when I go to a conference, that’s my favorite thing- when I go to a conference, because I think they are innovators, and they are the people who are staying on top of it, and you go to a conference, and you see this new stuff and they show you how they implemented it into their work flow, and then you do come back to your office and then you’re like “Ah, I found these cool things,” and you start telling your coworkers and you start implementing it. So I think conferences for me, are what excite me and get me to bring that back to work.

Greg, who works in a low-tech organization, also believes that high-tech practitioners can be influential. He was influenced by a high-tech practitioner to adopt the Internet years ago. Greg believes that in order to influence someone to use a technology, a benefit has to be demonstrated.

(A high-tech PR person) could tell me how it's useful in their business and therefore it could be useful in my business. In fact, I was introduced to the Internet by a fellow public relations person. The very first person I knew who knew what the Internet was, and I'm not sure it was even called the Internet then, I can't remember. It was back in 1988 or so. A friend of mine in the PR business with an agency said, "Well I have this neat thing called Prodigy on my computer at home." I think it was Prodigy. So I said, "What's that?" And he says, "Well you turn your computer on and it hooks through a telephone line and you get this- almost like a magazine screen," and I can't remember how he described it, but he said, "Yeah you can get sports, and I can read about entertainment, and I can get the news," and I couldn't understand what he meant. I didn't know what the screen looked like or anything, but here's a guy who opened my eyes. And when he said, "You can get news and information," suddenly he's telling me a benefit.

Raynie, a practitioner in the low-tech group, feels as though she often lags behind the majority in adoption of new technologies. She mentioned a time when she was influenced by a couple of high-tech PR practitioners who had more technology experience than she did.

And then all of a sudden one day I bought an mp3 player, and Jason and Rochelle showed me all this stuff, and it rocked my world, and now it's all I do. (laughing) But it took someone else to show me.

Joey, a PR practitioner working in a high-tech organization, feels that high-tech PR practitioners could easily convince other PR practitioners to adopt new technologies. He also thinks that it would be easier for people in the PR field to hear about technologies from other PR practitioners who are technology leaders than to hear about the same technologies from highly technical innovators. Although Joey interacts with innovators daily at his job and is an early

adopter himself, he thinks that if a practitioner with more technical expertise than he has introduced a technology to him, he would be more likely to adopt that technology than if one of his technology research colleagues introduced it to him.

Well I think innovators can be in my field. I probably would be more likely to adopt (if a PR person introduced an innovation to me) because hopefully with this person we would speak the same quote unquote language. They would know exactly how to communicate with me. First of all, which words I would need to hear to make me want to adopt. PR in general is about getting people to adopt your beliefs or your company's beliefs, or something like that. So in general, they would know how to communicate with me. But then we'd also kind of think on the same wavelength. As opposed to the researchers who are using highly technical words that are very field specific. This PR practitioner could use field-specific terminology but I'd be familiar with it because I'm also in the field.

Tracey, another early adopter working in a high-tech organization, has experienced this influence from more innovative PR practitioners. She explains how other PR practitioners within her organization influence her adoption decisions. Although she is an early adopter herself, she still looks to the technology leaders in her PR department for information and advice.

It's really informal. There are a couple of guys in our public affairs group who are really innovative. They will be huddled around a computer looking at some new blah blah gizmo, and I'll say, "This looks really neat, what is that?" Or I'll go and ask them if I want to purchase something. I've been thinking about getting a digital camera. The first thing I would do for something like that would absolutely be to ask them. I would ask Sean. He is very thorough; he evaluates things that he knows. I asked him when I bought my car, too! Or like yesterday, I get so tired of lugging around my heavy laptop. I noticed one of the guys had a really portable tiny one, and I know that's just what I

need. So of course he said, “You can get them reconditioned for only \$800 at so-and-so Website.” So I want the link to that right away.

RQ1 was indeed answered through the findings of this study. The data collected supports the notion that PR practitioners in technology organizations are more likely than PR practitioners in other industries to influence adoption in others. The research also showed that the technology savvy practitioners in any organization influence the adoption decisions of the less innovative PR people in their own organizations. The data also supports the idea that high-tech PR practitioners have influence within their networks of other public relations practitioners outside of their own organizations.

#### Adoption Rate is Independent of Practitioner Roles

RQ2 stated, “How does adoption rate differ among practitioners in different roles?” To answer this question, the coded data from the transcripts were sorted into categories according to the roles of each respondent. The technology adoption rates of managers, technicians, internals and externals were compared for trends and tendencies. With regard to roles research, this study supported the work of previous studies. Managers, technicians, internals and externals all used technology for productivity and efficiency. One high-tech manager, Fawn, gave examples of technology’s role in efficiency. She uses a shared network to get approvals for printed materials. This tactic allowed her to work in a more productive manner.

Instead of emailing them back and forth, when our graphic artists finished with them we just put them up on a drive and our director knew to go to that drive to review and approve them. That’s just really been efficient.

A technician, Ivan also saw the benefits of using technology for productivity and efficiency. He, also, works in a high-tech organization. “It’s made it so that I can operate more efficiently,” he said, “...get more stuff done, and stay busier more.” Joey, a high-tech

practitioner who has the role of an internalist, gave more examples of efficiency. These high-tech practitioners working in various roles all echoed the same theme of getting the job done more efficiently.

I definitely think (technology) helps you to be more efficient because you're always learning new and better ways to do the same thing. It makes it so much easier. It's all about efficiency. I guess that's technology's greatest asset. It makes gathering research so much more quickly and with the Internet we've got tons of information at our fingertips. And it's catalogued in a way that's easily understood. It makes it so much easier to research, organize. It makes it easier to learn.

Roy, who serves an external role in a low-tech organization, talked about technology's benefits for efficiency as well. Although he hasn't been able to adopt many technologies in his job, he sees that there would be a benefit of efficiency and productivity if he were able to adopt these high-tech tools.

Well, I just think it would be something to make us more efficient and effective at delivering our messages. You know, getting the word out. You know, communicating. I definitely think that if we could harness technology to somehow communicate better with people throughout the state, we could deliver messages to them.

The data supported another common theme among practitioners in all roles and in both the high-tech and low-tech groups. Prior researchers have labeled technology as a research tool for practitioners. The use of technology as a research tool was definitely a common thread among all groups of practitioners in the study. A high-tech internalist, Tracey, mentioned how important technology is in research for her writing jobs. "The Web is the primary way to do research," she said. "If I'm going to do a story on someone, the first thing I do is look up their Website."

Roy is an externalist working in media relations in a low-tech organization. He, also, uses technology for research. He, also, remembers using the Web for research at his former job as a journalist.

Well, it's research of all kinds. Like I said, as a reporter, all I did was research. All I did was surf online all day finding things. Information, phone numbers, the latest news.

You're always looking for information. And if you're talking about more traditional types of research you can look for it right there without going to the library. You can look it all up online. I think technology has become research. It's about data gathering.

Greg serves a different role at another low-tech organization. He is a manager, and he, too, noted the benefits of research. "Research is excellent," he said. "You know, the Internet certainly has completely changed how I do research." Jade serves the role of a technician. She is a graphic designer working in a low-tech public relations organization. She talked about the benefits of research, also.

(I use the Web) to research clients, to get information. And I also use it to try and keep abreast of the technology itself, and blogs, or just understanding how the Internet's evolving in terms of how that affects how I communicate with my clients.

In this study, as indicated by the findings of other researchers, some managers talked about using technology for more strategic purposes. Evaluation of competition and issues monitoring were common themes. One high-tech manager, Matthew talked about the importance of research for the strategic purpose of following the competition.

If Linux Networks were getting ready to roll (a new technology) out for the mainstream IT media, they would go do some quick research ... you better do your homework and do some research, find out who else is launching something similar. What's the other one most likely to have? How do you compare that to the IBM XYZ, or the HP or Intel

product? And that is, in this industry, all over the place- from PCs on up to supercomputers. I can't tell you how many times that I've sat down with a company I'm interviewing and they can't answer the most simple questions about their competition. And they think that they don't need PR!

Another manager who works for a low-tech organization talked about monitoring issues of importance for her own organization by using RSS feeds. Raynie thinks that technology makes it easier to keep up with what is going on in her industry.

Oh that's another thing, you know how you can sign up for (an RSS feed service that sends you) any articles (that) have anything to do with (unnamed low-tech organization). Now that's great, it comes right to your door; you don't have to find it.

RQ2 stated, "How does adoption rate differ among practitioners in different roles?"

Although some differences were found in technology use among practitioners in different roles, adoption rates were not shown to differ according to the roles of practitioners. Managers, technicians, internals and externals all tended to adopt at rates independent of their roles within the organization. The data did give support to the roles researchers in other PR studies in terms of the use of technology for productivity, efficiency, research and strategy. In the study, practitioners in all roles demonstrated the use of technology for productivity and efficiency. All types of practitioners were shown to use technology for research, also. Some managers showed more strategic uses such as issues monitoring and analysis of competition, but no further differences were found among the various roles with regard to adoption rates. Information gathered from transcripts showed that adoption rates are probably unrelated to the roles of practitioners.

### Results Emerged Independently of the Hypotheses and Research Questions.

Besides addressing the hypotheses and research questions set out by the study, there were several independent themes that emerged from the data. A consistent trend in the data involved findings about the high-tech tools that practitioners are using in the workplace. Information emerged dealing with the exclusive tools available to high-tech practitioners, the tools still emerging in the mainstream workplace, and the importance of new media.

#### Practitioners Working in High-Tech Environments Have Access to Exclusive Tools

Many of the communication technologies used by the high-tech practitioners in the study were seen as exclusive technologies that have not yet diffused to the general practitioner community. Tracey, a practitioner working in a high-tech environment, likes to use the Access Grid for video conferencing. This was a common tool available to the majority of the high-tech practitioners interviewed. Several high-tech practitioners in the study mentioned the benefits of Access Grid, and these individuals used it regularly in their high-tech PR jobs. This tool was never mentioned as a technology used among the low-tech practitioners in the study. Tracey explains how she uses this high-tech, audio-visual communication tool.

The Access Grid is something we use for meetings all the time. It can be really helpful. It's nice to feel like you're really meeting someone. On a conference call people take forever to keep introducing themselves in the beginning over and over as people join the call, and there are no visual cues for when someone else is going to speak. I much prefer the Access Grid. We've had events and seminars in it, and have invited the media to come in and see the events. It's harder for the media to participate since they don't usually have a node in the newsroom, but the media like to see how we can use these high-tech tools to communicate.

Joe, a practitioner in a high-tech environment, casually talks about an interactive wiki Webpage that is a common tool used in his high-tech organization. This tool was mentioned as useful by several other practitioners in the high-tech sample, but again the tool was never mentioned by the low-tech group of practitioners. Joe describes a collaborative benefit of using a wiki. “We actually used a wiki page to manage our booth last year, to work together and come up with posters and things,” said Joe. “And that seemed like a pretty good way of doing it.”

Beth is a practitioner in the high-tech group who has access to a wall of video screens that always seems to impress reporters who visit her building for tours. This type of visualization tool was common among the high-tech group, while the low-tech group didn’t have access to such a tool. Beth describes how the video screen has helped her to gain media coverage.

One thing we use it for is our powerwall, Colossus. When we have reporters visit, we do PR to try to help us, we’ve got this ten foot by thirty foot video wall that’s extremely high resolution. Now that has been pretty effective. It’s a seamless tile display, so the projectors mesh perfectly on this custom special optical glass wall. Ours is very stable and it’s super high resolution. And that’s shown to every tour group that comes through. They all want to go to that room to see that stuff. And the reporters love it. We keep telling them, will you stop doing stories about the powerwall? Do a story about the stuff we’re showing you on the powerwall! We’ve had enough stories about the powerwall. It’s like the ultimate big screen TV. So everybody’s really excited about that. They show the satellite images and people will say, well there’s my car parked right there. That technology along with the satellite data is something that we can personalize. We can demonstrate our viz and database capabilities ... So that sort of thing has been an effective tool that the general PR market wouldn’t have access to.

Kathy also works in the high-tech sector. She doesn't like to print posters for the trade shows in which her organization participates. Instead, she prefers to use liquid posters and has used this high-tech tool for quite a while. Kathy is so dedicated to the use of this tool that she refuses to put up any printed posters in her booth. Kathy explains the exclusive tool. "For two years now we've done liquid posters," said Kathy. "It's an interactive touch screen and they can touch where they want to get information and it comes up on the screen."

When practitioners in the low-tech sample were asked to list technologies that they were using in their jobs, none listed exclusive technologies like Access Grid, wikis, video walls, or liquid posters. Most of the low-tech practitioners listed tools such as email, the Internet, electronic mailing lists, databases CDs and Websites.

#### Blogs, Wikis and Podcasting Are Not Yet Popular in Mainstream PR

Some technologies that came up in conversations with both high-tech and low-tech practitioners were seen as communication tools that have not yet made it to the mainstream. Roy, a practitioner working in a low-tech environment, talks about two of these technologies. "A lot of PR people are still reluctant to use blogs and podcasts," said Roy. "These things haven't come full force yet." Another practitioner, Eddie, also works in a low-tech organization. He hasn't yet adopted podcasting for his PR job, although he has thought about the idea. "I was thinking about podcasting," he said. "I haven't done any at work, but I've seen a lot online, and I've listened to podcasts at home just for different topics."

Joey works in a high-tech environment. He also mentions technologies that are still beginning to emerge among general PR practitioners. "I don't think blogs and wikis have been adopted yet by most practitioners," said Joey. Kathy is another early adopter in the high-tech sector. She thinks that the sales industry is another sector of mainstream marketers that hasn't adopted some of the high-tech tools in her toolkit.

Well, marketing and advertising maybe isn't as bad as sales. I have a good friend who is in sales and it's a real noticeable difference. I don't consider myself really that big of a geek, but she probably doesn't know what a blog is or a wiki or anything like that. If you go outside the communications realm, as well as outside of the high performance computing realm you'll see a big drop.

Although PR Practitioners Outside of the High-Tech World Are Late To Adopt New Media, They Do See These Technologies as Important

Although the low-tech practitioners in the study weren't using many of the latest technology tools, they did see these communication technologies as beneficial. These low-tech practitioners had lots of ideas about how they could use new technology. Their ideas were innovative, but their practice didn't show innovation. Although she has never used podcasting in her low-tech PR job, Jessica has ideas about how she could benefit from the technology.

My first thought was if we could partner with iPod, or if you could load your recruiting video through your welcome message, it could be uploaded and people could download personal, like a podcast, I'd want all the videos about (unnamed low-tech organization), and you could download these mini videos.

Roy also has concrete ideas of how to use technology. He would like to see his low-tech organization use the Web to generate more media attention at his press conferences.

I would love to do more for press conferences. The other day we had a press conference and we invite all these people who have papers from different areas where they have papers but they can't really afford to send their people. They did an article, but they couldn't send their guy down here. But if we could've had something online, the news crew could just watch it and get the information they need. And maybe send in their own questions or something like that.

Although she hasn't used this technology yet, Raynie would rather use GPS technology instead of printing paper tour guides. Her low-tech organization doesn't currently use this tool, but she knows that it would prove to be beneficial. "I've thought about GPS tracking," she said. "We would love it if we could do some kind of GPS tour."

Other findings in the data gave insight into career-related topics such as job satisfaction and salary information. There were differences found between the two groups in both of these areas.

### Job Satisfaction Is High Among High-Tech Practitioners

Job satisfaction was a benefit mentioned often by high-tech practitioners. Although there was not an official question about job satisfaction on the moderator's guide, several of the participants in the high-tech group mentioned their own job satisfaction while answering other questions. Because of this, job satisfaction became a coding category during the axial coding process. None of the practitioners in the low-tech group made comments in reference to job satisfaction. Their transcripts remained void of the code markings for this category. Joe is a practitioner in the high-tech sector. He likes his high-tech PR job better than his two prior jobs working as a reporter and working in a PR agency. "It's a more stimulating and challenging environment with my high-tech job," said Joe. "I tell people that this is the best job I've ever had." Kathy also likes her high-tech job. When she compares the job that she has to the other PR jobs available, she sees the little perks of the high-tech sector as an important part of her job satisfaction.

We do have more cool stuff. I work in this lovely building with all this technology and a Herman Miller chair. It's just a whole difference in how it looks. Part of it is the national scope of what we all do. We're dealing with people all across the country and

all across the world. We get more exposure and we get more exposed to things. I really like that about my job.

Katie has no plans to leave her inspiring high-tech job. Katie says, “I don’t think that (another PR job in a low-tech field) would inspire me as much as the high-technology does.” Although none of the practitioners in the low-tech group mentioned their job satisfaction, one should remember that this was not an official question asked to participants. Many practitioners in the low-tech group did communicate negative feelings about the lack of innovation in their organizations. Some felt that they were held back by their organization. Jessica, a practitioner in one of these low-tech environments, has ideas that she can’t implement.

I’m a Web designer, and if I worked at a company that said, “Give me your innovative ideas, and we will publish them,” then we’d have a blog on the homepage. We would have video on the homepage. For me it goes back to resources. Because we have fabulous ideas around this table, but then it comes down to, “OK, who is going to implement this? Who is going to maintain it?” And then you get bogged down into your everyday workflow, and it’s like “Oh yeah, I wanted to do that, but that means I have to maintain it.” Or “I have to find the stories” or “I have to find ...”

#### High-Tech PR Practitioners are Perceived as Having Higher Salaries Than Low-Tech PR Practitioners

Many practitioners in high-tech environments believed that they were making more money than practitioners with similar jobs working in low-tech environments. Katie is a manager in a high-tech organization. She believes it pays to stay in high-tech.

Comparatively speaking I do have a higher salary. In terms of the careers, I think if I decided to move into something else, I think I’ve made up my mind that I have to stay in

high-technology. Even though I explore other options, I don't think that it would make sense at this point.

Fawn is a manager at a high-tech organization, also. She believes that she has a financial perk from her high-tech PR job.

Actually I do feel like it helps me in my career. Part of being at the (unnamed high-tech organization), we have our own way of doing things. We get away with doing things different with hiring. My salary is considerably higher.

Joey is just starting out at his high-tech PR job. He also sees technology as a competitive advantage when it comes to salary.

I think technology is just a way to set yourself apart from your competition when you're competing for salaries or for jobs and things of that nature. The more you learn, the more valuable of an asset you become to the company. The more value you add to the company, obviously you can command a higher salary. People like future employers, they know that you dealt with things of a highly technical nature and you're basically worth more.

Ivan is a graphic designer within the PR department at his high-tech organization. He believes that the high-tech sector has more money to offer employees across the board.

Well, I've looked at other jobs, and the public relations jobs seem to be in some cases \$20,000 less than what I'm making now. So I kind of look at those and say there's no way I'm going to leave for that. Maybe the pay scale is just higher. I think that's what it is. Across the board I think there's just a lot of money in our industry.

Practitioners working in low-tech environments also suspected that salaries were generally better in the high-technology PR field. Raynie is a manager for an organization that she considers to be behind in terms of technology adoption. Although she and Ivan were

interviewed separately and are from separate backgrounds, her response mirrors his. Raynie said, “If you’re working in the field of technology, those kinds of industries may pay more throughout the organization. And therefore it trickles down to the PR professional.”

Social and cultural issues were found to be influential in the adoption of technology. Trends in the data suggested that those in high-tech environments develop skills in changing highly technical messages into information that is easily understood by the public, and those in both high-tech and low-tech cultures expressed a feeling of being forced into adoption of technology.

#### Social and Cultural Issues Affect PR Practitioners’ Adoption Habits

Several practitioners both in high-tech environments and in low-tech environments talked about the social issues and cultural norms affecting their adoption choices. Joe is a practitioner in a high-tech environment. He cites these social issues when he talks about how people are often reluctant to be on camera during video conferences. “It’s not a matter of technology, it’s a matter of sociology,” said Joe. “A lot of these things are really tough to overcome with social barriers and social attitudes.” Jade works in a low-tech environment. She also sees technology adoption as a social issue. “It’s very based on anthropology, sociology and social interaction,” she said. “Innovation is happening by the people that are using and actively solving in their everyday lives.” Fawn, who works in a high-tech and innovative environment, feels social pressure to adopt. The cultural norms in her organization change her behavior.

If I join an organization that’s just really high-tech and they’re using all these new tools, it’s up to me to get on board pretty quick. You know, I don’t want to be a technophobe or someone who doesn’t know anything, so I just make it part of my job responsibility to get up to speed pretty quick and learn how to use those things. For me it’s about my organization and getting into the culture of the organization to do what they’re doing.

### High-Tech PR People See Themselves as “Translators” with a Special Skill in Delivering Technical Messages

Practitioners in the study who were currently working in high-tech environments tended to label themselves as “translators.” They talked about being faced with the job of changing a technical message into one that the general public could understand. Joey works in a high-tech environment. He is surrounded by innovators and thinks of his role as the interpreter for the early adopters and the general public.

You have to be skilled in both languages to be able to communicate. You have to be able to interpret the information that the experts are giving you, that you work with, these researchers, these early adopters, and translate it into a more common language that the general public or the government is going to understand for your late adopters and your laggards. Which I think is important because on that bell curve you showed, those percentages probably make up most of the people in the country.

Beth also works in a high-tech environment. She believes that the translation skill that she has honed in her PR job makes her different from practitioners working in low-tech industries.

The information that we’re communicating is much more technical than what a general PR person communicates. It’s not like, “We have a new version of bread this week, or we have a new model of mobile home.” The stuff that we’re communicating takes a lot to make it interesting and understandable for the general public. I always refer to myself as a translator between the scientists and the rest of the world. I’m a translator.

### PR Practitioners Often Adopt Because They Feel “Forced” To.

Several practitioners in both high-tech environments and low-tech environments talked about how they were “forced” to adopt technology. This was another category that was created

from common threads in the discussions. Although there was no question on the topic of being “forced” to adopt, several practitioners mentioned this phenomenon. Joey works in a high-tech organization. He feels that he needs to use the same technology as his co-worker innovators.

Sometimes you’re quote unquote forced into it just because of the people you work with. In order to communicate with them you have to use the technologies that they use. A lot of times we are kind of forced into adopting their technology just because that’s what they use on a daily basis. Compared to them I am a laggard, I guess, just because they are so much of an early adopter. So I’m kind of forced into using their technology because it’s sometimes the only way to communicate with them.

Beth works in a high-tech organization as well. She also feels that she is being forced to use a particular technology.

In-house for our stuff we’re using sharepoints. It’s another incarnation I think of wikis just because our management has gone to Microsoft on the brain. So we’re being forced to use Outlook and all of those. So that brings us into using sharepoint, but it lets us work with external people, too.

Greg works in a low-tech organization. He is a self-proclaimed late adopter. Greg thinks that some technology has the effect of forcing him to take action.

An email isn’t any different than a letter, it’s just delivered quicker. You’re forced to open it; you’re forced to read it. The only trouble with email is that it tends to force you to give a quicker response than a letter does, or a note or a memo. It kind of has an urgency about it

Through the coding of interviews and focus groups, findings emerged regarding technology adoption among age and gender groups. Themes dealing with perceptions of women and older practitioners were particularly interesting.

## Women Continue to Move Ahead in Technology Adoption

This study supported the findings of Porter and Sallot (2003) showing that the gender inequities of the past are continuing to fade. Most in both the high-tech and low-tech groups cited examples of technically advanced women in prominent positions. Many did cite old stereotypes of men liking technology “toys” more than women, but this wasn’t named as a benefit to men in the workforce. Joe is a manager in his late forties who works in a high-tech environment. He talks about the gender issue from his perspective.

Men get excited about the new toys just because it’s a new toy. I do think that the open-mindedness that makes you consider new things is more common to women. Men all want the latest toy whether they need it or not.

Beth works in a high-tech organization. She is in her early fifties, and she believes that women keep up with technology in order to stay ahead. In her organization, the ones lagging behind are men.

I’ve seen that the big laggards that we’ve had are men. I can’t think of any woman out there who is significantly behind the technology, but we have a number of men that are. These are the ones that think everything has to be on paper. I don’t know if it’s just because of the competitiveness that the women have to adopt the technology to stay competitive, and the men maybe don’t. All of the ones that we see that are set in their ways and don’t want to adopt anything new are guys.

Ivan is a young practitioner who works in a high-tech environment. Since most of the innovators he works with are men, he tends to think that men may adopt earlier than women. With this being said, Ivan notices women in prominent positions at his high-tech workplace, and he seems optimistic about women moving forward in adopting technology.

I look at Lindsey Suttle who is the director of high performance computing where I work, and she is an early adopter. I would make the assumption that men probably adopt technology sooner, only because when I look at where I work it's mostly men. Are women less likely to adopt technology? I don't think so. I think once the demand is there, it doesn't really matter.

Older Practitioners Are Seen as Late Adopters, but Their Interpersonal Skills  
Are Often More Developed Than Younger Practitioners

There was a definite trend in the data toward practitioners believing that age affects technology adoption. Most in the study believed that younger practitioners tend to adopt technology early because of their willingness to try new things. Many believed that older practitioners had been in the business long enough to create their own systems of doing things without depending on technology. One should remember that this finding only describes a perception held by those interviewed. Older individuals are often seen as late adopters, when in reality they are not adopting late because of their age, they are adopting late because of other factors such as limited exposure to technologies.

Young people tend to do more things on impulse and do what's cool. Where older people tend to think, "Is this really useful? Is it worth my time? Is this going to be popular?"

Joey works in a high-tech organization. He is in his mid twenties, and he also believes that age is a factor. He thinks that older practitioners have more experience that gives them a bias towards the older technologies that they have found useful in the past.

New technologies are coming out daily, and as people grow as practitioners they find methods and technologies that work well for them. Thus reducing the need for them to

adopt new technologies or even familiarize themselves with new technologies. I definitely think younger practitioners would be the earlier adopters of the two.

Greg is a manager in his late forties. He works in a low-tech environment and he also believes that younger people tend to adopt early. Greg's feelings are surprisingly similar to Joey's comments, even though Joey is more than twenty years younger and works in an extremely high-tech environment. The two were interviewed separately; however, they both point out that older people tend to stick with tried and true technologies that have worked in the past. Greg, however, points out the important fact that older people can learn to adopt new technologies if they are taught in a way that they are familiar with.

I think younger people are always the innovators. It's just because while you're young and growing up, everything is new, and you don't necessarily have tried and true things to compare it to. It's just all new, so let's try it out. But I think with that said, it doesn't mean that your basic 90-year-old can't figure out how to use technology. There are 90-year-olds right now teaching people how to use the Internet. I know that for a fact. I've been involved with it, and I've seen it. In California a big study was done, and I met the guy who did the study and I've seen the videotapes of it. I had a little experience in my previous job because we were dealing with the elderly. But there's a guy in California who really wanted to know about adoption of technology by senior citizens. And he found that a senior citizen, oddly enough, could learn how to use the Internet pretty quick, as long as it was taught in a way that they were familiar with. Some minor changes were made to account for things like nearsightedness, arthritis, a little bit lack of mobility and comfort. For example, a wireless keyboard goes a long way to letting senior citizens work on the Internet because they can sit in a comfortable chair or wherever they want to with a wireless keyboard. And bigger screens go a long way.

Some younger practitioners believed that they could learn from the older practitioners in areas relating to writing and relationship building. Ivan is a high-tech practitioner in his late twenties who sees that he may be trading his interpersonal skills for his innovativeness.

We're dealing with people who are twenty years our seniors. They have very valuable people skills. They've worked with people via phone and all these older technologies. So there's actually something very valuable about that that we could learn from. (An older practitioner) was so nice and personable. She really has a skill set that I don't have because I spend so much time behind a computer screen and not dealing with people like that on a regular basis, so I'd say that that's a difference. Maybe we do spend entirely too much time with email and all this kind of stuff. It's funny because her emails were like letters, you know. And that was cool in a sense. With the new technology, the Trio 650, if I'm going to send you an email it's like "Hey, man, here's the address, bye." And she had these really great, nice letters that I would receive via email and I was like wow this is wild. But some of that is disappearing.

Themes in the study also emerged from questions dealing with the adoption curve, and practitioners' thoughts on the placement of the practitioner community on the curve. Although those in the study tended to label the PR practitioner community as members of the late majority category, those interviewed gave specific reasons to explain why practitioners often adopt late.

#### The Sample Perceived the General PR Practitioner Community to Adopt Technology Just After the Rest of the General Public Catches On

The data collected by having practitioners place the general PR practitioner community on Rogers' adoption chart showed interesting trends. The late majority category was the most popular category chosen for placement of the general public relations community among both high-tech and low-tech groups. Practitioners in the low-tech group consistently placed the

general PR population in the late majority group. Roy, a practitioner in a low-tech organization, defends his position on this.

There've always been innovative firms and innovative people, but as a whole it's a conservative environment. For a variety of reasons everything is a little slower. Like "Let's make sure this is something we want to do. Let's make sure this is an investment we want to make." When you're talking about PR as a whole we're actually a bit slow to start doing these things.

Jessica, a low-tech practitioner in the same focus group, agrees with Roy on this one. She looks at the label of "late majority" in a realistic manner. "In theory PR people should be early majority, but in actuality it's not that way," said Jessica. In a separate interview, Greg, a low-tech practitioner, explains why he thinks the PR profession falls in the late majority category.

I would say, in general, the PR profession is a late adopter of technology. I haven't attended a conference yet where somebody has taught me something that hasn't been around in the marketplace for a good deal of time. You know, technophiles are already using it and it's already out there. We tend to learn from the innovators. I don't think PR people are necessarily innovators in technology. We're not in the technology development business. We're in the communication business. So unless somebody tells us about a new medium, or shows us a new medium, show us how it works. We have to see it in practice, and then we might adopt. So I think we're late adopters.

Although the late majority category was also chosen more than any other category among the high-tech practitioners interviewed, the high-tech practitioners in this study tended to have higher expectations of the PR practice in general. Considerably more of these high-tech practitioners than low-tech practitioners interviewed felt that the general public relations

practitioner community fell somewhere above this late majority category. Tracey, a practitioner in the high-tech sector, is an example of one of the high-tech practitioners who placed the general PR practitioner community higher on the chart. Tracey has high expectations of the profession.

I think PR people are more early adopters and early majority. I think they don't have that drawback to say no to things. Since I was a journalist I always find myself saying "Nobody is ever going to print that," or "that's not a newsworthy story, I would've never covered that." I think the general PR population is more open-minded than that.

Joey is another high-tech practitioner who went against the grain in labeling the general PR practitioner community. Although most high-tech practitioners tended to label the PR profession as late majority, Joey, like Tracey, believes that the PR profession adopts earlier than that.

I think my profession falls to the left of the majority on the chart. To be effective as a PR practitioner you have to be ahead of the general population. You have to be smarter than the general population. Not to say that public relations is about outsmarting or outfoxing anyone, but you have to be smarter than them. In a sense you're out-thinking them and anticipating needs and opinions.

#### Practitioners Adopt Technology Late Because of Money, Time, and Strategy

Several factors came up as hindrances to technology adoption. Some factors like money, time and strategy were mentioned again and again in both the high-tech and low-tech groups. Money is a major influence on technology adoption. Greg, a low-tech practitioner, is on a tight budget. He tends to be late to adopt because of it.

I can't think of a single technology that we're grabbing early. Like I said, I'm constrained by budget, but as far as technology goes, I need to be sure of its effectiveness

before I go into something new. I'm totally restrained by budget. I couldn't do any of those things if I wanted to.

Other practitioners in the study mentioned that technology adoption decisions were often based on the time-investment in a technology compared to the benefits received from the use of that technology. The more of a time investment needed, the greater the benefit a practitioner would expect from the tool. Joey is a high-tech practitioner. He sees time as a critical factor when choosing to adopt.

I think as with any new technology you're kind of leery of the time it would take you to learn and get fully acclimated to it, and be comfortable using it. If it would be easier to just stay where the things are for the time being. I guess it's just more of an error in judgment and planning and allowing for time to learn that new technology. Whether it's true or not, I have this aversion to it because I feel like it would take me a long time to learn it, whether that may be the case or not. It could be extremely user-friendly, but if I'm under this impression that's always going to kind of influence my actions, I guess. Then like I said, secondly, it's making the time to actually figure it out.

Eli works in the low-tech sector. He also mentions the time involved in adopting new technologies. He is careful not to waste time on complicated technologies.

I've gotten into a lot of places where the cooler the technology is, the harder it is to use. A lot of times it's more complex. Because it works so great, people think it should just happen like that. Unfortunately a lot of things are more complicated than you think and require more time.

Jessica works in a low-tech organization, also. She knows that the maintenance of technology projects take valuable time.

In the beginning people are excited and you have to have one person who says “OK, it’s time to change these photos,” or “It’s time to do this.” And it’s that one person who has to have the time to keep it going.

Many practitioners in the low-tech group believe that some practitioners adopt technology late because of a carefully thought out strategy. These individuals believe that the public relations practitioner community intentionally waits to adopt certain technologies until after they have caught on with the general public. Greg, who works in a low-tech environment, explains why he uses this strategy.

I’m going to be a laggard for most things, and there’s a good reason that PR people lag behind. In the PR business it’s more effective to reach larger groups. You’re trying to reach the masses. If you’re out here (pointing to the early adopter category) the masses don’t have the technology. So what I’m really doing is I’m waiting for mass adoption. And some technologies will fall off and some will catch on. I’m just waiting for the masses to catch on.

Roy’s comments in a separate meeting mirror Greg’s idea that practitioners have a late adoption strategy. Roy also works for a low-tech organization, and he defends his belief.

PR is all about reaching a mass audience, you know, a large audience. It’s about getting messages out to most people. And if you’re using a technology that reaches you know, 10 people, that’s probably not very good for advertising or PR.

Eddie who is in the same low-tech focus group as Roy, casually comments in support of the idea. “You can’t really be ahead of the consumer,” he said. Jade, in the same low-tech group, feels that the general public lays the groundwork for the technologies that PR practitioners chose to adopt. “They are the majority,” she said. “They are in charge, and they’re controlling what we do.” Jessica, a low-tech practitioner in this focus group, has a similar idea

about why practitioners strategically wait for the majority of people to adopt before using a new technology. Jessica said, “PR people are so conscious of bad publicity that they are afraid to take fast steps. They wait to see who else will do it first. I think they are late majority because of that.”

The term “laggards” was often used to compare low-tech practitioners to high-tech practitioners, and it was also used when comparing high-tech practitioners to the innovators in their workplaces. However, when participants were asked to place themselves and the general PR practitioner community on Rogers’ adoption chart, neither the high-tech practitioners nor the low-tech practitioners officially labeled themselves or the general PR community as laggards. This supports prior research that states that PR practitioners are no longer laggards. As members of the late majority, the general PR practitioner group still lags just slightly behind the majority of people. The high-tech group tended to label themselves as early adopters, and the low-tech group labeled themselves between the early majority and late majority categories.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION**

## Contributions of the Study

Although much research has already been done on the topic of diffusion of innovations, its application to the field of public relations is a subject area that leaves much to be learned. Since no researcher in public relations has thoroughly explored the topic of how diffusion of innovations affects the field of public relations, one major contribution of the current study is to present the topic of diffusion of innovations in PR as a new field of study. Social networks and influence are important to public relations because of the nature of the field. PR practitioners strive to be experts at communication, persuasion, and audience targeting. Diffusion of innovations is an area with several themes in common with PR. Diffusion researchers segment groups according to their adoption habits, and public relations practitioners segment target audiences into key publics. Researchers of diffusion explore the characteristics of influential opinion leaders and change agents, and public relations practitioners study public opinion and changing public opinion. Diffusion research, like research in public relations, is about communicating. The two fields have much to offer each other, and they should be studied together as a new area for research.

The study's findings serve a practical purpose, giving new and useful knowledge to the PR profession as a whole. The study offers new findings on the influence of interpersonal networks and proximity to innovators in the adoption of new technologies among public relations practitioners. Its results offer insights into career factors such as salaries and job satisfaction that are important to practitioners when making career decisions.

The study suggested that innovative environments and proximity to innovators do benefit practitioners' careers in terms of power, influence, and access to exclusive tools. Within the public relations profession, practitioners are encouraged to strive for a seat at the management table. The information and authority that comes with being a leader within the inner circle of an

organization is seen as crucial for success in the field of public relations. Influence, power and access to high-tech tools are all factors that can play a role in whether a practitioner gains membership within the dominant coalition. Public relations is a management function, and if practitioners within innovative environments have an edge at gaining a seat at the management table, this is big news for the PR world.

The contributions of this study are also important for practitioners who are weighing options for job choices. In addition to the many other factors involved in such a decision, practitioners should consider the innovativeness of an organization before making a decision to move to a new organization. The study suggested that salaries and job satisfaction are often improved in the high-tech sector. Although this study only measured the perceptions of those involved, the fact that salaries and job satisfaction are perceived to be improved is a benefit to a group of professionals in the business of managing images and perception.

The study also suggested that practitioners who have close proximity to innovators in technology-rich environments do indeed adopt technology earlier than other practitioners. This adoption of technology seems to be highly influenced by organizational culture. Since other researchers have proven that technology adoption can help practitioners in their careers, this information is useful on a practical level. The finding could encourage practitioners in innovative organizations to spend more time learning from the innovators with whom they interact regularly. It also could encourage practitioners in a low-tech environment to join a networking group that offers them closer proximity to innovative people. The technology that these innovators share could increase practitioners' power and influence.

Since practitioners in high-tech fields tend to think of themselves as translators, continually changing highly technical information into information that is understandable by the public, this may prove to be a valuable skill that practitioners in more general fields can learn to

hone. The skill of shaping information for public consumption is important to practitioners in all fields. Practitioners can apply this translation method while reaching out to new markets in various industries. One objective that shows up regularly in PR campaigns across all industries is the goal of disseminating information to audiences that are unfamiliar with the organization in question. Learning to shape information for an audience who speaks a “different language” is an important skill for all PR practitioners, and looking to those in the high-tech sector can offer tactical methods to practitioners in all fields.

The study also gave insight into the adoption patterns of general practitioners. It suggested that public relations practitioners are generally perceived as adopting late, but they are not seen as lagging very far behind the majority of people. This late majority categorization is a perception that practitioners should know. If practitioners working in non-technology fields understand that other practitioners are likely to perceive them as adopting new technologies late, a practitioner may decide to act on this knowledge. Depending on the situation, it may benefit practitioners to be prepared to prove to their peers in the PR field their technical knowledge and willingness to adopt technologies.

The study suggested that organizational culture greatly influences why practitioners tend to adopt late. Money and time constraints were suggested factors as well. Some practitioners in the study saw late adoption as a strategy to reach more general audiences. If a practitioner is determined to adopt early, these influences of time, money, culture and strategy can be addressed individually. Themes found in a study like this aid practitioners in development of budgets, in staffing planning, and in the creation of strategic objectives.

Some technologies were found to be in the early stages of adoption, not yet accepted by mainstream audiences. Blogs, wikis, and podcasting were seen as new media that are emerging as tools for communication. Although most low-tech practitioners in the study weren't found to

use these new technologies, the low-tech practitioners did know the importance of new media. These tools can benefit the field by offering new ways to communicate with narrow target audiences in a manner that is extremely inexpensive. Old technologies that rely on printed communication are limited by funding and other finite resources. These new technologies not only offer economical means of communication but also offer interactivity and two-way feedback from audiences. Although the low-tech practitioners in this study were not currently using these new media, they knew the potential of what lies ahead in the future of technology tools for PR.

The results of this study add a significant contribution to the literature in public relations and in diffusion of innovations. Prior roles researchers in PR showed that practitioners' use of the Web is linked to their roles within an organization. The current study supported the findings of Porter and Sallot (2003) and added to that knowledge. The findings of the current study showed that practitioners in all roles tend to use technology for productivity, efficiency and research. As found by the previous study, managers in this study tended to use technology for more strategic purposes. The current study suggests that roles do not affect the rate of adoption of new technologies among PR practitioners.

The study also adds to the findings of Porter and Sallot (2003) suggesting that practitioners no longer are laggards in technology adoption. The current study suggests that practitioners have moved ahead in technology adoption. This information is important because it can inform practitioners about the kind of skills that their peers in the field are honing. Practitioners at all adoption levels should know that the field is progressing in the technology arena. Savvy practitioners will study how technology might be important to their strategic planning. The study showed that women in the profession are continuing to move ahead in technology use. The findings support previous literature by Porter and Sallot (2003) who proved

that women have caught up with men in use of new technology, such as the Web. Since women make up the majority of the PR field, this information is useful to practitioners of both genders. Both men and women working in PR should be aware that the playing field for job advancement has become more leveled in the technology arena. The current study also suggests that older practitioners are still perceived as adopting after younger practitioners, but their interpersonal skills keep them successful as practitioners.

#### Limitations of the Study

Various limitations to the study should be considered when determining its contribution to the field. The first limitation of the study is that its results are not generalizable due to the small sample size included in the focus groups and interviews. Only twenty practitioners from two narrow fields were consulted in the data collection. The small number of people involved in the study limits its findings to allow only for discovering trends, not proving patterns of behavior in larger populations. Because the participants in this study were polled from either university public relations or the high performance computing industry, the results cannot be generalized to the entire population of public relations practitioners. Since participants in the high-tech group were slightly older overall and had slightly more management experience than the participants in the low-tech group of this study, results may also be skewed. Another limitation to the research lies in the fact that those who participated in the study are inherently the individuals who are interested in the topic of technology in public relations. This factor could have influenced the results. Although the coding process was implemented to remove any bias coming from the researcher, since the coding was done by the same researcher who proposed the hypotheses and research questions, limitations could have occurred in the coding process. The study's findings on age and gender could also be limited due to the age and gender of the researcher interviewing participants. The researcher was younger than most of the participants involved in the study.

This could have influenced the participants' answers to questions dealing with age. Since the researcher is a woman, findings on gender could have also been influenced in the data collection. Participants in the study may have answered gender questions differently due to the gender of the facilitator.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research include the creation of a quantitative study to test the same hypotheses and research questions. A national email survey of public relations practitioners using questions specifically developed from the findings of this qualitative study would yield an important contribution to the field. A broader sample of practitioners in diverse fields across the United States would give more insight to the tendencies of the general public relations practitioner community. This type of study would give information about the varying degrees of proximity to innovators and show shades of differences in technology adoption and its effects on career factors. In a quantitative survey, the varying ages and roles of practitioners could also be better analyzed for any effects on adoption and career benefits.

One area of interest that could add useful information to the field would be additional research into the effects of technology on two-way communication. Initial information from the qualitative study suggests that early technology adoption may lead to improvements in two-way communication. If a national email survey posed specific questions dealing with interactivity and two-way communication used by early adopters of technology, practitioners who are late adopters could benefit from practical communication techniques employed by their high-tech peers.

## REFERENCES

- Alange, S., Jacobsson, S., & Jarnehammar, A. (1998) Some aspects of an analytical framework for studying the diffusion of organizational innovations. *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management*, 10(1), 3-22.
- Albrycht, E. (2004). Turning blogs into useful communications tools. *Public Relations Tactics*, 11(3), 14-15.
- Alter, C., & Hage, J. (1993). *Organizations Working Together*, Newbury Park, Sage.
- Baker, E., Geirland, J., Fisher, T. & Chandler, A. (1999). Media production: Towards creative collaboration using communication networks. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work: The Journal of Collaborative Computing*, 8(4), 303- 333.
- Burns, L.R. & Wholey D.R. (1993). Adoption and abandonment of matrix management programs: Effects of organizational characteristics and interorganizational networks. *Academy of Management Journal*, 36, 106-138.
- Callison, C. (2003). Media relations and the Internet: How Fortune 500 company Web sites assist journalists in news gathering. *Public Relations Review*, 29(1), 29-41.
- Deffuant,G., Huet, S., & Amblard, F. (2005). An Individual-Based Model of Innovation Diffusion Mixing Social Value and Individual Benefit. *American Journal of Sociology*, 110(4), 1041-1069.
- DiNardo, A. M. (2002). The Internet as a crisis management tool: a critique of banking sites during Y2K. *Public Relations Review*, 28(4), 367-378.
- Duke, S. (2002). Wired science: use of World Wide Web and e-mail in science public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 28, 311-324.
- Dumlao, R., & Duke, S. (2003). The Web and e-mail in science communication. *Science Communication*, 24(3), 283-308.
- Esrock, S. L., & Leichty, G. B. (2000). Organization of corporate Web pages: Publics and functions. *Public Relations Review*, 26(3), 327-344.
- Fennell, M.L., & Warnecke, R.B. (1988). *The diffusion of medical innovations: An applied network analysis*, New York: Plenum.
- Finkelstein, S. (1992). Power in top management teams: Dimensions, measurement and validation. *Academy of Management Journal*. 35(3), 505-538.
- Glover, K.D. (2006). The rise of blogs. *National Journal*, 38(3), 30-35.

- Granovetter, M.S. (1973). The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78, 1360-1380.
- Greenhalgh, T., Robert, G., Macfarlane, F., Bate, P., & Kyriakidou, O. (2004). Diffusion of innovations in service organizations: Systematic review and recommendations. *Milbank Quarterly*, 82(4), 581-629.
- Grunig, J.E. (1992). *Excellence in public relations and communication management*. Hillsdale, JH: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Grunig, J.E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Hachigian, D. & Hallahan, K. (2003). Perceptions of public relations Web sites by computer industry journalists. *Public Relations Review*, 29(1), 43-62.
- Hallahan, K. (2001). Improving public relations Web sites through usability research. *Public Relations Review*, 27(2), 223-239.
- Hearit, K. M. (1999) Newsgroups, activist publics, and corporate apologia: The case of Intel and its Pentium chip. *Public Relations Review*, 25(3), 291-309.
- Heath, R. L. (1998). New communication technologies: An issues management point of view. *Public Relations Review*, 24(3), 273-289.
- Hiebert, R. E. (2005). Commentary: new technologies, public relations, and democracy. *Public Relations Review*, 31(1), 1-9.
- Hill, L. N. & White, C. (2000). Public relations practitioners' perception of the world wide Web as a communications tool. *Public Relations Review*, 26(1), 31-51.
- Jo, S. & Kim, Y. (2003). The effect of Web characteristics on relationship building. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 15(3), 199-223.
- Kang, S. & Norton, H. E. (2004). Nonprofit organizations' use of the World Wide Web: are they sufficiently fulfilling organizational goals? *Public Relations Review*, 30(3), 279-284.
- Kauffman, J. (2001). A successful failure: NASA's crisis communications regarding Apollo 13. *Public Relations Review*, 27(4), 437-448.
- Kent, M. L., Taylor, M. & White, W. J. (2003). The relationship between Web site design and organizational responsiveness to stakeholders. *Public Relations Review*, 29(1), 63-77.
- Lawson-Borders, G. & Kirk, R. (2005). Blogs in campaign communication. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49(4), 548-559.

- Leichty, G. & Springston, J.K. (1996). Elaborating Public Relations roles. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73, 467-77.
- Lundvall, B.A. (1992). *National Systems of Innovation. Towards a Theory of Innovation and Interactive Learning*, London, Francis Pinter.
- Marken, G.A. (2005). To blog or not to blog, That is the question? *Public Relations Quarterly*, 50(3), 31-33.
- McMillan, S.J. (1999). Health communication and the Internet: Relations between interactive characteristics of the medium and site creators, content and purpose. *Health Communication*, 11(4), 375-390.
- Motion, J. (2005). Participative public relations: Power to the people or legitimacy for government discourse? *Public Relations Review*, 31(4), 505-512.
- Naude, A. M. E., Froneman, J. D., and Atwood, R. A. (2004). The use of the Internet by ten South African non-governmental organizations- a public relations perspective. *Public Relations Review*, 30(1), 87-94.
- Peled, A. (2001) Centralization or diffusion? *Administration and Society*, 32(6), 686-710.
- Persaud, A., Kumar, U, Kumar, V. (2001). Harnessing Scientific and Technological Knowledge for the Rapid Deployment of Global Innovations. *Engineering Management Journal*, 13(1), 12-19.
- Plowman, K. (2005). Conflict, strategic management and public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 31(1), 131-138.
- Porter, L.V. & Sallot, L.M. (2005). Web power: a survey of practitioners' World Wide Web use and their perceptions of its effects on their decision-making power. *Public Relations Review*, 31(1), 111-119.
- Porter, L. V., Sallot, L. M., Cameron, G. T., & Shamp, S. (2001). New technologies and public relations: Exploring practitioners' use of online resources to earn a seat at the management table. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*. 78(1), 172-190.
- Porter, L. V., & Sallot, L. M. (2003). The Internet and public relations: Investigating practitioners' roles and world wide Web use. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*. 80(3), 603-622.
- Raho, L. E., Belohlav, J. A. & Fiedler, K. D. (1987). Assimilating new technology into the organization: An assessment of McFarlan and McKenney's model. *MIS Quarterly*, 11(1), 46-58.

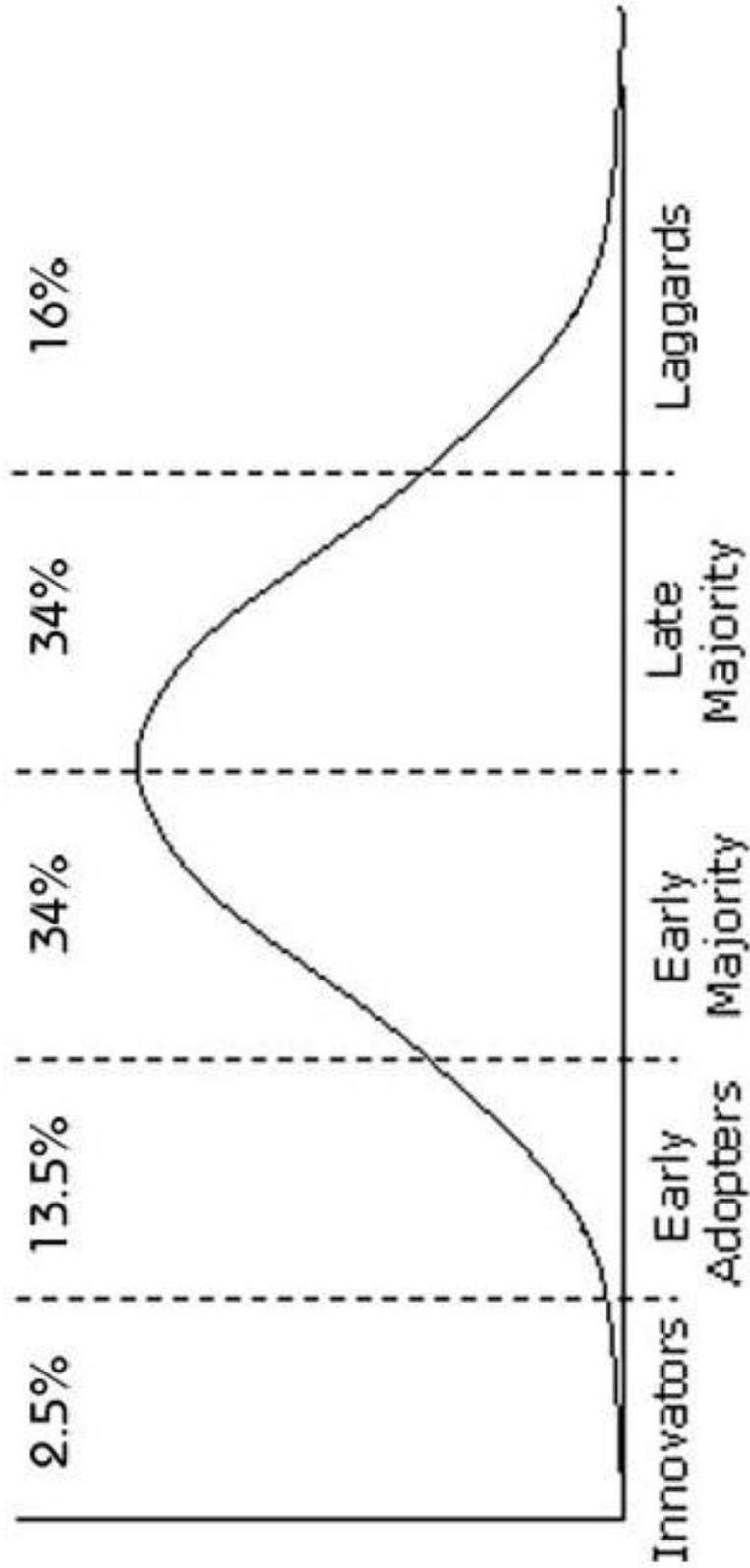
- Riva, G. (2002). The sociocognitive psychology of computer-mediated communication: The present and future of technology-based interactions. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 5(6), 581-598.
- Robertson, T., & Wind, Y. (1983). Organizational cosmopolitanism and innovation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 26, 332-338.
- Rogers, E. M. (2004). A prospective and retrospective look at the diffusion model. *Journal of Health Communication*, 1(9), 13-19.
- Rogers, E. M. (1983). *Diffusion of Innovations*, 3rd ed. New York: Free Press.
- Rogers, E. M. (1995). *Diffusion of Innovations*, 4th ed. New York: Free Press.
- Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th ed. New York: Free Press.
- Ryan, M. (2003). Public relations and the Web: organizational problems, gender, and institution type. *Public Relations Review*, 29(3), 335-349.
- Sallot, L. M., Porter, L.V., & Acosta-Alzuru, C. (2004). Practitioners' Web use and perceptions of their own roles and power: a qualitative study. *Public Relations Review*, 30(3), 269-278.
- Singer, J. (2004). Strange Bedfellows? The diffusion of convergence in four news organizations. *Journalism Studies*, 5(1), 3-18.
- Strauss, J.L., & Corbin, J.M. (1994). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sturaitis, L. (2004). What's the big idea? *Public Relations Tactics*, 11(12), 11-15.
- Taylor, M. (2000). Toward a public relations approach to nation building. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 12(2), 179-210.
- Taylor, M. & Perry (2005). Diffusion of traditional and new media tactics in crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, (31) 209-217.
- Taylor, M., Kent, M. L., & White, W. J. (2001). How activist organizations are using the Internet to build relationships. *Public Relations Review*, 27(3), 263-284.
- Wasserman, T. (2005). Blogs cause word of mouth business to spread quickly. *Brandweek*, 46(35), 9.
- Weenig, M. W. H., (1999). Communication networks in the diffusion of an innovation in an organization. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 29(5), 1072- 1093.
- Wejnert, B. (2002). Integrating models of diffusion of innovations: a conceptual framework. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28(1), 297- 327.

Westphal, J.D., Gulati, R., & Shortell, S.M. (1997). Customization or conformity? An institutional and network perspective on the content and consequences of total quality management adoption, *Administrative Sciences Quarterly*, 42, 366-394.

White and Raman, N. (2000). The World Wide Web as a public relations medium: The use of research, planning and evaluation in Website development. *Public Relations Review*, 25(4), 405-419.

**APPENDIX A: ROGERS' ADOPTION OF INNOVATIONS CURVE**

**Rogers' Adoption of Innovations Curve**



## **APPENDIX B: EMAILS TO RECRUIT HIGH-TECH PRACTITIONERS**

Subject: Help a grad student and win an iPod!

Dear PR supercomputing participants,

I'm the public relations manager for the CCT, and last year during the PR Birds of a Feather meeting I really enjoyed networking with all of you. I am writing to invite you to participate in a focus group that I'm facilitating this year during the SC conference in Seattle. My masters thesis research is exploring the topic of diffusion of innovations in PR. I am hoping to find some information about career factors that may be influenced by high-tech working environments. Since this year we won't be holding our regular Birds of a Feather meeting, the focus group will be the only chance for our PR group to get together to network. I'm sure the discussions will be beneficial to you since we'll be talking about innovative new technologies that are useful to the PR field. At the focus groups, I'm holding a drawings for iPod Shuffles as a recruiting incentive. Please email me or call if you are interested in participating.

Thanks,

Jennifer Hughes

[jhughes@cct.lsu.edu](mailto:jhughes@cct.lsu.edu)

225-555-5677

Subject: Help a grad student and win an iPod!

Hi PR group,

I am looking forward to seeing all of you in a couple of weeks in Seattle. If you haven't yet registered for the focus group, please consider attending. I am also holding one-on-one interviews to gather information for the study. My time at the conference this year is flexible, so I can work around your schedules.

Thanks for your help!

Jennifer Hughes

[jhughes@cct.lsu.edu](mailto:jhughes@cct.lsu.edu)

225-555-5677

Subject: Help a grad student and win an iPod!

Hi all,

I'm just checking in one last time. There is still space available for new participants if you are interested in participating in a focus group or interview. For those of you attending the focus group, remember to meet on Thursday in room 204 at 3:00.

Thanks,

Jennifer Hughes

[jhughes@cct.lsu.edu](mailto:jhughes@cct.lsu.edu)

225-555-5677

## APPENDIX C: FLIER TO RECRUIT HIGH-TECH PRACTITIONERS

# Public Relations & Technology

Seattle Convention Center  
Room 204  
Thursday November 17th  
3:00 p.m. or 4:15 p.m.

## Which techy tools will help your career?

My name is Jennifer Hughes and I am a public relations practitioner and graduate student at Louisiana State University. For my masters thesis research I am studying technology use by public relations practitioners. My hope is to determine whether practitioners in high tech work environments use new technologies before other practitioners. Other studies have shown that technology use can increase a practitioner's salary, role and even power in an organization. My study will expand on this to see if high tech organizations can offer a practitioner a better career path. If you are employed as a full time public relations practitioner, you are eligible to participate.

Each focus group will last 1 hour and will be video taped for record keeping and transcribing purposes. This is a great chance to network with other public relations professionals while learning useful information about the latest technologies being used by your colleagues.

During each focus group held at SC|05 I will be giving away an iPod Shuffle to one lucky winner. Since the focus groups will be small (no more than 10 participants each) your chances are good.

Help a grad student and ...

# Win an iPod Shuffle

## You have a 1 in 10 chance!

Call my cell at 225-405-5677 or email me at [jhughes@lsu.edu](mailto:jhughes@lsu.edu) to register for one of my focus groups.



## **APPENDIX D: EMAIL TO RECRUIT LOW-TECH PRACTITIONERS**

Subject: Please attend my focus group!

Hi PR friends,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a focus group that I'm facilitating in order to gather data for my thesis. My research is exploring the topic of diffusion of innovations in PR. I am hoping to find some information about career factors that may be influenced by technology in your work environments. I'm sure the discussions will be beneficial to you since we'll be talking about innovative new technologies that are useful to the PR field. Please let me know if you are interested, and I'll get you registered to attend. In case helping me with my school work isn't enough of an incentive, I plan to buy delicious Papa John's pizza for all those participating.

☺

Thanks,

Jennifer Hughes

[jhughes@cct.lsu.edu](mailto:jhughes@cct.lsu.edu)

225-555-5677

## **APPENDIX E: MODERATOR'S GUIDE**

### **I. Introduction**

#### **A. Welcome**

Thank you so much for coming today to participate in this focus group. I'm Researcher Hughes and I will be your moderator. I'd like to tell you all a little bit about my research and then I'll ask you all to introduce yourselves. I am a public relations practitioner working at LSU's Center for Computation & Technology. I'm also a graduate student at the university pursuing a master's degree. So now that you know a little about me, I'd like to go around the room and have each of you introduce yourselves.

#### **B. Statement of purpose for the focus group**

The information I learn from you today will help me to gain a better understanding of how my research topic relates to practitioners in the field. Your answers will help me to complete my thesis research in public relations and technology. The focus of the research is to learn about what influences practitioners to use new technologies, and how these technologies affect their careers. Research has shown that practitioners have used technology to move up in their careers, and I want to dig a little deeper on that topic to find out how innovation can help our profession. I'm looking forward to hearing your input on this topic, so thank you again for agreeing to help me. Your feedback will give me valuable information for my research.

#### **C. Guidelines to follow**

This focus group is not just a way to test my research questions, it's also the perfect chance for you to share ideas on how you are each using technology in the PR field to help you with your own career goals. I hope that each of you will gain useful information from the time we spend discussing today. Please be generous with sharing your experiences and thoughts with each other.

Your participation here is totally confidential and voluntary, so if you need to drop out for any reason during the focus group, that is fine. Does anyone have any questions at this time?

### **II. Warm up**

#### **A. Set the tone**

First let me ask if everyone is comfortable with voicing opinions on the topic of technology and innovation. I know that technology can be intimidating for some of us, but this is not a test of who knows the most about computers, or who uses the most technology. This is a chance for me to learn from you what makes a particular innovation become useful and accepted in our field.

#### **B. Set the participants at ease**

You are all welcome to comment at any time to me or to each other. I'll be leading the discussion to get certain topics covered, but you are the ones with the information. Please feel free to share your ideas or opinions when they come to mind. I want to learn from each of you, so don't be shy to speak up.

### III. Clarification of Terms

#### A. Establish the knowledge base of key terms

In this discussion we will talk about how new innovations diffuse into our work lives as PR people. I'll be looking for information on how you learn about new technologies and the interaction that you have with innovators who might share new technologies with you.

#### B. Provide definitions of key terms

*Innovation-* For this study, we will use the term innovation in the broadest sense of the word. An innovation is any new technology or tool that helps you to do your job.

*Innovator-* Today we'll be talking about your experiences interacting with those people who adopt technologies first. I'm sure you know some people who know just about everything dealing with the latest innovations, and they are very close to the pulse of what is going on with what products are new in the marketplace. These people are so close to the innovations that they sometimes invent their own versions of new technologies. You might interact directly with these individuals who stay on the cutting edge of technology, or you might only interact with these people through mutual acquaintances.

Chart: *Diffusion of innovations bell curve*

### IV. Establish Easy and Non-threatening Questions

#### A. The initial questions are fairly general. These are about innovators and innovations.

*(About innovations)*

What technologies are you using in your PR job? Why?

What technologies are you using that others may not be using? Why?

Which technologies are widely used in the field of PR? Why?

Which technologies *have not* been adopted by practitioners? Why?

Which ones are still in the process of becoming introduced and used?

(If any of these technologies are not mentioned at this point, probe for their thoughts on the following innovations: blogs, wikis, intranets, Access Grid press conferences, other grid enabled communication, video conferencing, CVS for press releases, instant messaging, and PDA's.)

Why do (or don't) you use these technologies?

What factors might influence your decisions to use an innovation? Costs, benefits, consequences?

*(About innovators)*

Tell me about the innovators that you know.

How can you tell if someone is an innovator?

Do you work with any of these people? Tell me about the interaction that you have with them.

How are innovators "opinion leaders"?

How do innovators influence your decisions to adopt an innovation?

How do they share new technologies with you? What have they shown you?

What if someone who was closer to your field of study (another practitioner) introduced an innovation to you? Would you be more likely to consider using the new innovation if it were introduced to you by someone who is not an innovator? Why do you think that is?

## B. More in depth questions

*(Now we're going to talk about public relations practitioners as adopters.)*

What about PR people who work at organizations that are extremely high-tech, like NASA or the National Science Foundation, or a place like the MIT Media Lab?

Are there organizations that are so close to innovation that it affects the technologies their PR people adopt? Why?

How does their proximity to innovators affect their careers? *(If nothing, prompt with roles, salaries, power.)*

Tell me about the personality characteristics of PR people who adopt earlier than others?

How does age affect technology adoption?

What about gender?

Does the adopter's socioeconomic situation affect their choice? (education, urbanization, travel, industrialization, economic well being, health conditions)?

## C. More detailed questions are more specific

*(About effects of technology & innovations)*

How does technology affect your career? *(If no response, prompt with roles, salaries, power.)*

How does technology make you a better practitioner?

How does technology make you a better manager?

How does technology help you communicate with publics?

How does technology make you more collaborative?

How does technology help you with research?

How does technology make you more creative?

How does technology make you more efficient or speed up production?

How does technology make you more effective at crisis communications?

How does technology make you better at issues management?

What about the PR profession in general? Are we leading the way, or lagging behind the majority? *(Show chart: Where do you think we fall on the chart? Are we early adopters, early majority, majority, or late majority?)*

*For one on one interviews only:*

*In general, are you someone who adopts technology early or late? Where do you think you fall on the chart?*

## V. Wrap-Up

A. Identify and organize the major themes from the participants' responses

B. Ensure that any conversational points not completed are mentioned: Did I miss anything?

## VI. Member Check

A. Go around the room and determine / confirm how each member perceives selected issues.

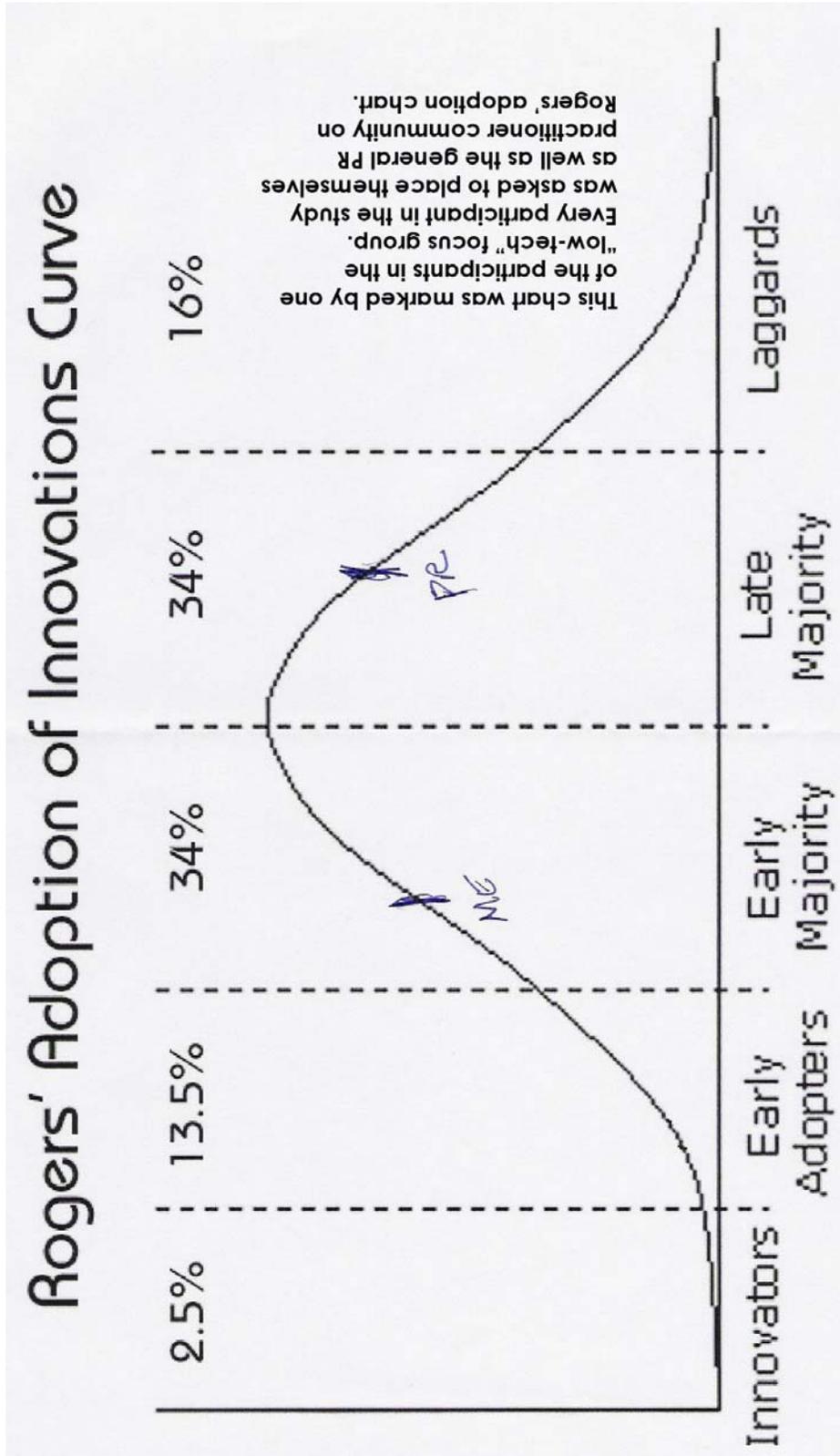
## VII. Closing Statement

A. Request confidentiality of information

B. Answer any remaining questions

C. Express thanks

**APPENDIX F: ADOPTION CURVE MARKED BY A PARTICIPANT**



## APPENDIX G: OPEN CODING EXAMPLE

you have to have face to face communication. And you're so engrossed in a technology like that it can just lead to poorer relationships with your employees.

*How does technology help you communicate with publics?*

It's kind of weird to think about how they did it before there were computers or email, because that's exactly what I use in my job to communicate with those publics. Rarely do I use TV anymore, rarely do we use newspapers directly. It always begins with some form of digital dissemination. Whether it's email or whether it's posting it to our Website, in some cases posting it to a message board, that's what I use, and I think it's because of the environment that I work in. Because those are the quickest and most efficient ways to communicate with the general public.

*How does technology make you more collaborative?*

Well, I was talking about CVS and Access Grids before, they allow people who are not necessarily close in proximity to interact with each other, and get that – what I feel is -important face to face interaction for meetings on projects or anything like that. So you gather these people together and allow them to have face to face communication, or screen to screen, I guess. You're enabling them to be interactive. You're enabling them to communicate with each other in

## APPENDIX H: COLOR KEY FOR AXIAL CODING

### Adoption Rates: (Pertains to H1, H2, and RQ2)

- Bright green with red text Technologies adopted early or easily adopted
- Bright green with blue text Technologies adopted late, or slow to catch on
- Bright green with black text Technologies used for PR work
- Turquoise with black text Technologies not used for PR work

- Violet with light green text Reasons to adopt quickly
- Violet with rose text Reasons not to adopt quickly

- Violet with white text People adopting before the majority
- Violet with yellow text People adopting after the majority

- Dark yellow with white text Organizational culture in support of innovation
- Dark yellow with pale blue text Organizational culture not in support of innovation

- Dark green with yellow text Benefits experienced with technologies
- Dark green with white text Problems experienced with technologies

- Pink with black text Social issues and culture affecting adoption
- Pink with white text Evidence of people being “forced” to adopt

### Proximity to Innovators: (Pertains to H1, H3, H4, and H5)

- Teal with white text Close proximity and interaction with innovators
- Teal with black text Limited proximity with very little or no interaction with innovators

Communication, interaction with, or observation of people who are earlier to adopt:

- Teal with yellow text Show and tell experiences resulting in adoption of new technology
- Teal with rose text Show and tell experiences not resulting in adoption of new technology

### Career factors:

- Red with white text General career benefits
- Red with yellow text Career benefits specific to salary increases
- Red with tan text Discussions about low salaries
- Red with pale blue text References to job satisfaction

### Power: (Pertains to H3, H4, and H5)

- Dark red with lavender text Prestige power
- Dark red with yellow text Structural power
- Dark red with pale blue text Ownership power
- Dark red with white text Expert power

*A specific kind of expert power here:*

### The influence of high-tech practitioners: (Pertains to RQ1)

- 50% grey with rose text Tech savvy practitioners influencing others
- 50% grey with light green text Tech savvy practitioners not influencing others

**Organizational roles: (Pertains to RQ2)**

Dark blue with white text Managers

Dark blue with yellow text Externals

Dark blue with pale blue text Internals

Dark blue with pink text Technicians

**Two-way communication (Pertains to H6)**

Blue with white text Evidence of two-way communication

Blue with yellow text Evidence of only one-way communication

**Personality characteristics:**

Black with white text Personality traits perceived to promote early adoption

Black with yellow text Personality traits perceived to hinder adoption

**Gender:**

25% grey with dark blue text Perceptions of technology adoption in men

25% grey with plum text Perceptions of technology adoption in women

**Age:**

25% grey with teal text Perceptions of adoption in older practitioners

25% grey with pink text Perceptions of adoption in younger practitioners

**Segmentation in public relations:**

50% grey with white text Differences in high-tech PR and low-tech PR

50% grey with yellow text PR field -vs- other communications and promotions fields  
(marketing/advertising/graphic design/sales/journalism/media relations)

50% grey with tan text Differences in PR practitioners working in different industries  
(university/ government/ corporate/ nonprofit /agency)

## APPENDIX I: AXIAL CODING EXAMPLE

you have to have face to face communication. And you're so engrossed in a technology like that it can just lead to poorer relationships with your employees.

How does technology help you communicate with publics?

It's kind of weird to think about how they did it before there were computers or email, because that's exactly what I use in my job to communicate with those publics. Rarely do I use TV anymore, rarely do we use newspapers directly. It always begins with some form of digital dissemination. Whether it's email or whether it's posting it to our Website, in some cases posting it to a message board, that's what I use, and I think it's because of the environment that I work in. Because those are the quickest and most efficient ways to communicate with the general public.

How does technology make you more collaborative?

Well, I was talking about CVS and Access Grids before, they allow people who are not necessarily close in proximity to interact with each other, and get that – what I feel is – important face to face interaction for meetings on projects or anything like that. So you gather these people together and allow them to have face to face communication, or screen to screen, I guess. You're enabling them to be interactive. You're enabling them to communicate with each other in

## APPENDIX J: SELECTIVE CODING EXAMPLE

you have to have face to face communication. And you're so engrossed in a technology like that it can just lead to poorer relationships with your employees.

How does technology help you communicate with publics?

It's kind of weird to think about how they did it before there were computers or email, because that's exactly what I use in my job to communicate with those publics. Rarely do I use TV anymore, rarely do we use newspapers directly. It always begins with some form of digital dissemination. Whether it's email or whether it's posting it to our Website, in some cases posting it to a message board, that's what I use, and I think it's because of the environment that I work in. Because those are the quickest and most efficient ways to communicate with the general public.

How does technology make you more collaborative?

Well, I was talking about CVS and Access Grids before, they allow people who are not necessarily close in proximity to interact with each other, and get that — what I feel is — *important face to face interaction* for meetings on projects or anything like that. So you gather these people together and allow them to have face to face communication, or screen to screen, I guess. You're *enabling them to be interactive*. You're enabling them to communicate with each other in

## **APPENDIX K: FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS**

### **High-Tech Focus Group**

Marta

I'm with the (unnamed high-tech organization) we're a DOD program that does customer service and outreach. I don't have any formal background in PR.

Fawn

I work for the (unnamed high-tech organization). It's part of the (unnamed high-tech organization). We not only serve (unnamed high-tech organization), but the national scientific community as well.

Beth

I'm at (unnamed high-tech organization). My background is in computer science and mathematics. I got into PR sideways through doing the Websites for the last 32 years. I've been doing press at the conference since 2001. I'm on the communications committee.

Kathy

I'm currently the public affairs director at (unnamed high-tech organization). In two weeks I'll be Marketing and Public Affairs director at (unnamed high-tech organization). I'm changing jobs, and my background is more print journalism and I stumbled into PR doing freelance work and stuff like that. I stumbled again into the high-tech arena. And once you get in, you just can't get out.

Joe

I'm communications manager at (unnamed high-tech organization). I also have a degree in journalism and worked as a daily reporter in the Bay area for about eight years before I joined a PR agency and then got laid off and then I was offered a one year editing job at (unnamed high-tech organization). Fourteen and a half years later I'm still there. Well, I'm now at (unnamed high-tech organization). And I had no idea. When I was in the interview they asked me the most important thing that happened in computing in the last year. And I said, "Seymore Cray died." (laughter) –"good answer!" That was about it. But I still got the job.

Joseph

I'm Joseph and I'm helping Researcher. I'll be behind the camera, so just ignore me.

Researcher

Yeah. I'll be transcribing the results of what we say today. I'm going to be changing everybody's name so it will be confidential and private, so your information is going to be connected with my little master's thesis, which won't be connected to you. So if you have any problems with some of the questions that I ask, you don't have to answer them, but it doesn't get very personal at all. We do talk a little bit about career advancement opportunities towards the end. My research is looking at the difference between high-tech PR practitioners and more general practitioners that might work in other fields like maybe clothing, food and beverage, or another non-tech field. I'll be looking at the closeness to innovators and interaction with them. I want to get feedback from you on whether you think there is a difference between high-tech and low-tech PR. My background is, I started out being trained as a PR person from LSU and now I'm getting my master's degree there working full time at the Center for Computation &

Technology as their public relations manager. I go to school there at night studying PR. It's very interesting for me to study the backgrounds that PR people come from. Before we get started I'd like to go over the bell curve in front of you. Everett Rogers looked at the ways that innovations diffuse through social groups. Innovators are in the first group. Then early adopters, majority, late majority and finally the very traditional people who lag behind in the last 16%. There have been some studies in the past that have shown that PR people have been lagging behind the majority. Lately it has been found that we're moving up a bit. At the end of our focus group my last question for you would be to put yourself on the chart along with the PR practitioners in the general workforce. Another thing I'm looking at is the career opportunities that this might make a place for. So does anybody have any questions?

Fawn

I do. When you talk about adopting innovations what do you mean specifically? Do you mean software and things that make it easier to do our jobs?

Researcher

Yes, all of that. The only thing that I'm not interested in looking at are the non-job related tools that you are using- unless you're using these things at home with hopes that you might bring it into your work environment. When I say innovation, that's any innovation that you would use for your job. Then when I talk about innovators, it's this 2.5 % on the curve who adopt the fastest. Any other questions? No? I'd like to hear for my first question, which technologies you are using and which ones you're not using and why.

Joe

I think Kathy saw this, but my daily calendar for this thing, I wrote it all down on a piece of paper. And to make sure I got here on time, Researcher had to write her information on my business card. I do not like what I think are electronic leashes. I have a cell phone that's the lab phone. I don't use it at night. I don't use it on weekends. I turn it off then. I just don't like that stuff. But I'm pretty good at figuring out ways to use the technology. (unnamed high-tech organization) was one of the first 100 sites on the Internet. We've been pretty good at figuring out how to use the Internet. But I'm not going out and finding the latest Internet software for that. When I see a technology and I realize how to use it, I may use it more effectively than others. Maybe I do identify with the laggards and the late majority, because I always try to figure out how what we're doing will end up from the end user perspective. So if I took the innovator's perspective, I don't know how good that would work out. My audiences are you know the DOE guys who use their "Crackberries" all the time. They always tell me, "We're on Blackberry, so ..." ok, well cool, but I'm not going to do anything about it.

Beth

Which means our emails to you have to be three words long. (laughter)

Joe

Yeah. Watch for type-os. So I don't use a lot of them. I use them when they come along, but I don't go out and actively seek them. I remember a great time when we were getting these new things that were coming out. It wasn't the palm, it was when they had these little teeny tiny keyboards. It was a "P" something. And they were giving them out like candy at Halloween at work and they were really cool, except nobody realized that it was really hard to type on a

keyboard that was that big. So everybody was using them for like a week, and my bosses were infrared printing from them. This was like '97 or '98. Everybody was loving them, and within a month, you didn't see them. You know, anybody still using one was like you know, a real stand out. One of us started giving them out because her school used them. The kids could use them 'cause their fingers were little- for their homework assignments.

Researcher

So that was a little too early to adopt?

Joe

Well, maybe it was the wrong path. 'Cause PDAs became pretty popular. But now I don't see near as many PDAs as I did four or five years ago when everybody had to have one.

Marta

One thing that was effective for me, this year I got lots of emails from vendors saying come to our booth and really it did make me want to go to those booths. It was the first year I've gotten those. But I thought that was an effective way of getting your message across. So I think email would be good. But it's got to be properly done, not overkill.

Kathy

The perspective of time effects a lot of how I think of this. I started my career before there was email... writing (laughs) or any of that stuff.

Joe

Stone tablets (laughter).

Kathy

Yeah. You know, email, the Web, or all of that fun stuff. And somehow we managed to get stories into newspapers. And we managed to communicate. And then when we first started using email and first got a handle of it, it was like, “God, this is great. I don’t have to call this guy, I can look at it at my own time,” and now, of course, email I’m cursing it because it’s just constant, and it’s tons of spam, and it’s more than you can manage, and things fall through the cracks, so it kind of goes up and down because of that.

Researcher

I know a lot of people have used things like Access Grid. Have you ever used that for a press conference or for media relations?

Kathy

Yeah. For the original Teragrid announcement back in 2001, there were four centers, Argonne, (unnamed high-tech organization), San Diego, and Cal Tech. Then the various vendors, Intel, IBM, Cisco. We sat there talking about how to have a virtual press conference with everyone all over the country. So we set up an Access Grid meeting and then most of the press couldn’t get on to the Access Grid. So Intel set up a call-in number. It was a combination of most of the press calling in and the people at the sites on the AG, then there were some press at the sites with the AGs. So it became kind of a good way to sell something that was supposed to be futuristic.

Researcher

Are there any other tools besides Access Grid that are really innovative that you guys have seen that are not available to general practitioners?

Joe

Well we do run the DOE's network for research, and they do do a lot of video conferencing, but it's something of a hard sell. Because people don't want to always be on camera. And especially when they're in their office, because that's where they scratch and burp. I remember watching one of these where at one point they all got up surreptitiously to go to the bathroom. But we wouldn't have known that otherwise, but they were on camera and we saw the whole room empty out. But I think the technologies are pretty cool. And we do a lot of collaborations with CERN and places around the world. You know people that can't just come together. So for things like that, it's really just great for when you have big time differences, so I think it's just great. But number one they're going to have telephones that are going to be video phones, and I remember seeing them in Disneyland in the house of the future, and it's like you run out of the shower and pick up the phone and it's like aaahhh! So managing the network, number one, it's not a matter of technology, it's a matter of sociology. A lot of these things are really tough to overcome with social barriers and social attitudes.

Beth

I recently had to use Access Grid for a meeting and after that meeting they decided "Let's just do a teleconference." Because sometimes the video doesn't add. But one thing we use it for is our Powerwall, Colossus . When we have reporters visit, we do PR to try to help us, we've got this ten foot by thirty foot video wall that's extremely high resolution. Now that has been pretty

effective. It's a seamless tile display. So the projectors mesh perfectly on this custom special optical glass wall.

Joe

And how often do you have to recalibrate that?

Beth

Well, no but ours is very stable and its super high resolution. And that's shown to every tour group that comes through. They all want to go to that room to see that stuff. And the reporters love it. We keep telling them, will you stop doing stories about the powerwall. Do a story about the stuff we're showing you on the powerwall! We've had enough stories about the powerwall. It's like the ultimate big screen TV. So everybody's really excited about that. They show the satellite images and people will say, well there's my car parked right there. That technology along with the satellite data is something that we can personalize. We can demonstrate our viz and database capabilities and pulling down the satellite data is something where we can show the university at the last football game and they can go, "Oh, that's where I parked. There's my car." So that sort of thing has been an effective tool that the general PR market wouldn't have access to.

Fawn

In general for me, a lot of it boils down to my organization that I work for. And how up to date they are on their technologies. I work for (unnamed high-tech organization) . And I started with (unnamed high-tech organization) in April, so I've been there maybe seven months now, and I had never even heard of the Access Grid. And I worked for Dell for eight years. But they never

used the Access Grid. People would say, “Are you going to the A.G. meeting?” and I would go, “What topic is A.G.? What’s this A.G.?” And they are like “Access Grid” and I’d say, “What the heck is that?” Recently I’ve started using the Access Grid and I think it’s really cool. You’re right, sometimes psychologically and sociologically I don’t want to be on camera. I just don’t feel like having people look at me or me look at them. But I think for the most part it’s very effective and you really get a good read for the people in the room and what they’re thinking or feeling about a topic by facial expressions. So that gives you a little more information about how things are going in the meeting. So I would say I’m probably one of the late majority type people, but I work for an organization that’s really on top of things and I want to get into that culture as quickly as possible. So if I join an organization that’s just really high-tech and they’re using all these new tools. It’s up to me to get on board pretty quick. You know, I don’t want to be a technophobe or someone who doesn’t know anything, so I just make it part of my job responsibility to get up to speed pretty quick and learn how to use those things. For me it’s about my organization and getting into the culture of the organization to do what they’re doing. But then from a communications perspective, it’s my role as a communications professional to try to use the latest and greatest tools for communications purposes. And sometimes I may have to introduce something new to the organization in terms of my job. Maybe no one else in the organization will use it, but I have to have it for my job, like media software. No one else in the organization uses it but me. But I have to use it to be effective. So I asked my director if I could get it and presented a business case, and he said sure. So I was able to buy it.

Joe

An interesting thing about this conference, which is apparently about computing, (laughter) when Kathy was the PR chair in ’02 and I was an annoying deputy to her. We decided to come up

with the idea of an electronic newsletter. Before we used to mail out the advanced program. In 2000 that thing was 16 pages long, it was a month behind schedule, and everybody was pulling their hair out wondering how much it's going to cost and none of these computing whizzes ever thought, "Duuuhh... we could send this stuff out electronically." So the two laggards here decided, let's do an electronic newsletter that came out on a regular basis. So we rolled out the electronic calendar so you could check that out too. But these were ideas that came from the communications team. I think that's an idea that again, it's figuring out the technology that's there and how to use it appropriately. So I think that's as important as the actual technology. And it's figuring out what's the best way to use it.

Kathy

And you're right, it's not always the innovators who are thinking innovatively and in practical ways of using technology. I mean, I've had to for years print out media kits and send them in a packet to management. I was told I have to print them out and send physical clips sometimes of media clips that were never physical ever. Things that were just online, because we had switched to keeping this stuff on a Web page at a certain URL. Well no one pays attention to that and they don't think you're doing anything unless it's there as a hard copy. So it was us trying to save some trees and not have to do as much busy work of copying and stuff like that. And these people who are winning Gordon Bell prizes are not wanting to look at it on a Website. At the place that had a role in inventing the Mosaic browser, it just seemed pretty ironic.

Researcher

A lot of talk is going on right now in the PR community about blogs and wikis. Do any of you think those tools are useful? Have you ever used those as communication tools?

Joe

We actually used a wiki page to manage our booth last year. To work together and come up with posters and things. And that seemed like a pretty good way of doing it. Our computing center folks all set it up so it was all password protected. And I had to get a NIRSC account to read it, (laughing) it could've also given me access to the big machines. They weren't quite thinking of the end user, but I think that worked pretty well. Blogs are interesting in that it's just a different name for the same thing that people have been doing. A certain newsletter that's known for its lack of paying people very well is inviting people to do blogs on the site this week because it gets you to have people write for free.

Fawn

Is that HPC Wire?

Joe

Yeah. Alison Clark is doing it and she loves it because she hasn't written much before and that's fine.

Beth

The climate research group is using a wiki to maintain their research and communication. In-house for our stuff we're using sharepoints. It's another incarnation I think of wikis just because our management has gone to Microsoft on the brain. So we're being forced to use outlook and all of those. So that brings us into using sharepoint, but it lets us work with external people too, so we bring in all of those and a lot of our different Websites that are communication teams. We set up a sharepoint so that everybody can drop documents in these virtual labs. And doing our

posters for this conference, that's what we did. We had a sharepoint of all the different people that are responsible for content on different posters, and the artists and the editors and so they can drop the latest version in there so that everybody can look at it and view it. And we can set up our action items so that everybody can see that oh, we're waiting on Joe to write this piece and then it goes to Damian for artwork and then to Tony for approval, or whatever. My group has especially made a lot of use of that tool, the sharepoints.

Fawn

Yeah. We're using sharepoint at (unnamed high-tech organization) too for our internal kind of repository. And I don't know much about its benefits or its disadvantages, but apparently our organization does not like sharepoint that much so we're evaluating a wiki. To be honest, personally, I don't know the difference between them, but I need to get up to speed on that.

Joe

We use this thing called e-room, which is where you can put these files in a central location for various projects. You can put them all in there. It's great. It's taken the place of actual communication. (laughter) Yeah. It's great. They put all these files in there and they name it in a way that only makes sense to them and they get like 200 files in there and you say, "You were going to do this report on this for me, can you tell me where it is?" and they say, "Oh it's in e-room." And they don't know what it's called anymore and they just expect you to sort through it. A couple of weeks ago in (unnamed high-tech organization) Mitch Cappour, I think he was the guy behind Lotus. He gave a talk about Wikipedia, which now has I think 400,000 entries, where Encyclopedia Britannica has I think, 160,000. And it's all volunteer created and maintained. But he talked about this weird social dynamic that allows this incredibly

comprehensive document to be completely volunteer created and maintained. And there's a small crew of people who do all the maintaining of the servers and things and he was shocked when he found out that there is no set schedule. These people all just figured out how to do it themselves and they created this thing that's just huge. You search Google, and it always comes up, there it is. So he was talking about the social dynamics of how that comes to be. So the technology and sociology have a lot to do with it.

Researcher

I'm wondering about the interaction that you've had with innovators and whether they've ever shown you anything or convinced you to try something because you've become friends with them or have had a close working relationship with them. Do you interact with the innovators at your organizations regularly?

Fawn

They're mainly like scientists and researchers, so they don't really turn me on to new technologies. But let me think about my I.T. people maybe. I have a lot of growing to do technically. I'm not the most technical person in the world. But I think my IT people teach me how to put things on certain drives. Putting all the files up on a Z drive or something where I just do all this emailing back and forth of files. For supercomputing we had 30 content pieces we had to create for our booth. Instead of emailing them back and forth, when our graphic artists finished with them we just put them up on a drive and our director knew to go to that drive to review and approve them. That's just really been efficient. I probably never would've thought of that unless I had help from my IT person.

Beth

I do get feedback from our researchers. They'll come in with this (in a German accent) "Ah, we have just tried ziiis new software called Zoap. It's really great. You should be using ziiis for our website." Our students come to me with their latest pet tool that they just tried out on the Internet. And I have to try it to see if it's cool and then they'll push our IT people to adopt it and support it for the lab. At our site, it's driven by the researchers going out and demanding that a certain tool be made available.

Kathy

In my (unnamed high-tech organization) life there's a group that focuses on how to make collaborative workspaces easier to use. I wouldn't call them necessarily innovators. Well, they are innovators and they are very technical, but they're not like cutting edge three dimensional, AMR, visualization and stuff. That stuff doesn't really apply to me in what I do every day. But somebody created an editable Web browser and anybody can just go in and change a type-o. You don't even have to use html anymore or different tools for organizing photos. I was looking for some way to redo our horrifying online photo gallery. It was just a mess. I was looking at commercial software packages, and I thought, well maybe there's someone here in house. Then I realized there was somebody doing research on exactly what I was looking for and now they've applied that university wide. There was a lot of resistance in the organization from these very hard line Web people who thought a page has to be created from scratch and has to be coded this way. There was a real orthodoxy that I was fighting against, from some of those same technical people.

Researcher

Is it easier to hear about an innovation from someone who is another PR person or someone who is more of an innovator?

Joe

I think it depends on the technology. These Scions, that's the thing I was talking about before, that's what they were called, that was from our desktop support people who were just experts in what you needed to be effective users at computer stuff. The other one though is (unnamed high-tech organization) about 10 years ago went to completely digital photography before it caught on. The reason they did this was they didn't have to wash chemicals down the drain and run a foul with the city of (unnamed city on the west coast) . So they got rid of all photo processing chemicals and this was a long time ago when they were doing gorgeous photography with very high resolution. The technology was available, but the reason we did it was to get out from regulators. But there's a couple of other little things that we found here. The little memory sticks. I first saw those at supercomputing. The big wopper 16 megs ones. They were coveted. They would hide them. Well, they still hide them, but they're much bigger now. That was something that was great because they all use laptops here. And you see more laptops here than anywhere else. So I think now we've gotten used to people working on laptops and everybody carrying everything around. And I think it's sort of the innovative culture more than the innovative people. I think we all work in places that really encourage innovation, and if somebody wants to go buy a new little thing like a digital camera, they'll say ok, yeah. You can get that. The big wigs will approve that expenditure because they are already innovators and they'll give it a green light. I don't know that it matters who shows you the innovation, I think it more depends on what they are showing me.

Kathy

It depends. Sometimes for the person who invents it, what they think is cool about it and what you think is cool about it could be very different. That might relate to what kind of job you have.

Beth

It really does depend on the type of tool. If it's something like regular office interacting and relating to email or stuff I'm going to go with my IT people's recommendation, because they know how compatible it is with everything else and what kind of support load it could take, but if it's something more unique like the best digital camera, I'm more likely to go with our researchers or the people who are best in that area, like maybe the viz folks. Because they know why this one has special features. At our site, I do PR for the computing side, but I sit in the computing organization, and my background is in computing, our people that are true PR professionals are more in the late majority. They are not tech based at all. So I certainly wouldn't be going to them for tool recommendations. They still subscribe to a manual clipping service! (laughter)

Joe

Well it's easier to print out those clips that the bosses require!

Marta

Well I agree. We just hired one more contractor and she was printing off everything instead of having it just on the computer, because we're all just so used to computers. She had come from a city background type of PR and she was used to having everything printed off.

Researcher

So she wouldn't be able to convince you to use any technologies?

Marta

No

Beth

Some of our researchers are like that. The first thing they do is print of the online manual.

Marta

That's true too.

Beth

These guys tie up the printer all day, printing off everything. So we still have a few like that.

Joe

What's funny is when they print out two copies to fax one and file the other.

(laughter)

Fawn

I would say that I'm more towards going with the most efficient, practical, effective tools. I'm not excited about some of the whiz bang stuff that some of the more innovative techy people might be into because a lot of times I have this feeling that it's just toys for them. I might think it's really cool and be open minded enough to take note of it if it sounds like it'll have a practical

application for me. But then I'm going to make sure that it fits in with my community of PR practitioners. I'll ask colleagues and people at meetings for professional organizations to make sure that it's something that people have heard of and use. I don't want to be someone who's using something that's just way out there.

Researcher

What do you think about the differences between high-tech PR and low-tech PR? Comparing a group like those of us in very innovative environments, and those in environments that are not innovative.

Kathy

There's a difference between high-tech PR and low-tech PR. I think it's about the varying degrees of high-tech PR. I know people in other areas of the University of Illinois who think they are doing real cool stuff, and compared to what is the norm in this high-tech community, it's pretty run of the mill. PR people take on the culture of the organization they are representing. I take part in a university wide communications council and I go to these meetings once a month. The public affairs people will come out and present things like, "Here's a Web tool for evaluating what people think of your Website," and it captures C strokes and sees where they go and keeps track of pages. I just sit there bored because we've been doing that for four years. Everyone else is saying, "Oh, this is great!" so there is a definite difference. Everybody uses computers, but not everybody uses online clipping services. To an extent, every PR newsletter I get these days talks about blogs and RSS feeds.

Researcher

Do you think the general PR community is using blogs and RSS feeds?

Joe

I bet they're all trying to sell blogs to their clients. I worked at Ketchum PR for two years, and that was the biggest bay area PR agency. I was in the business group, but they had a lot of important food clients. California raisins, Idaho potatoes, prunes,

Marta

Prune PR?

Joe

Yeah that was great. (laughing) But these (agency practitioners promoting food products) people were all kind of these bouncy people-persons. They would use the latest technology like Fed Ex overnight mailings of press kits. (laughter) But it was so funny because go to the media room here and these organizations are printing up huge press kits with more text than you'll ever want to read. They are putting out hundreds of them. I remember the first time I saw that NASA put one out on floppy disk. They had one for Mac and one for PC. Terra did too.

Beth

Now there are some that do the CDs but it's the minority.

Joe

There are stacks and stacks of printed material. And those are by the commercial PR agencies. They get paid to put out press kits. It's their tool. When I used to run the media room I'd put a limit of 20 in there because I only wanted to throw 19 away instead of 49. They bring in boxes.

Beth

People will pick up one or two copies the whole week.

Joe

We're in a weird culture because we're around these innovators and early adopters. We don't even realize the technology after a while, because that's just our way of doing business.

Beth

There is a big difference. We've dealt recently with some local PR firms. We were going to see if it would make a difference if we hired this local marketing firm to do some stuff for us. They came in with this 30 page presentation and the first 20 pages were about why having an identity or logo is important to your company. We went to them specifically to get a logo designed. Then they spent 20 pages convincing us that logos are a good thing. I'm thinking, well you lost my boss after page two when you're still talking about why logos are good. They are doing everything by statistics. You know, surveys show that people like this. It's so far behind what we're doing. I have got a friend who just got her degree in PR and she's going around interviewing, so I'm hearing about the places that she's going to in the area, like a mobile home manufacturer. And they are, like you said Joe, looking for the bright and bouncy person that can use email, and maybe some digital photos. I've got a friend who's in real estate, another type of

marketing, she thinks it's a big deal because she has the iPics virtual house tour. That's their big high-tech stuff in the marketing arena- the fact that they can do a video of the house or digital photos of the house. You can type in the number of bedrooms that you want, and their site will bring up which ones match it in the area that you want. That's their high-tech tool, and our guys have been doing that for 20 years. Instead of doing a press kit, one year we did this new type of hologram credit card type thing. It was about the same price as a press kit, but it was so cool. The URL and logo are in the card, but you can only see it when you hold it up to the light and turn it. We put all of our information on there. To get that approved for printing we had to call it a color brochure. This way it stays up to date because it's just the URL and you don't have to print more and more. We did that in 1994 and it's still good. People still think it's innovative. I've had to fuss at our guys because they want to change the URL. We have the first Website to go up and get approved for public access at the lab. I did the first one and had to figure out how to clear the information for publication. They didn't even have a procedure yet for electronic publication. They said, "It's going out on the Internet? Where anybody who wants to read it can see it?" This was before Mosaic became available, so when Mosaic came out, we converted it to that, and it was the first Mosaic site. Then came the Web and html. We are doing stuff that the lab hadn't even thought about having a policy for. Then I'm talking to friends who are going out for PR jobs in agencies and the big thing is, "Are you good at handing out party favors?"

Researcher

Do you think that this proximity to innovators is helping you in your career roles, power or salary?

Joe

I think I'm doing better than I ever thought I would. I hated the PR agency because you had to do whatever the next client that walked in the door wanted. They would throw money at us and we'd have to serve them. It's a more stimulating and challenging environment with my high-tech job. I tell people that this is the best job I've ever had. And I would've never imagined doing this.

Kathy

Before I went to the (unnamed high-tech organization) I was with the University of Illinois in a different capacity. I was in the college of agriculture. (unnamed high-tech organization) had this reputation of being the golden child. You know, the streets and hallways were lined with gold and they got everything. They were spoiled, they made a big salary. It was a part of the reason why I even applied for the job. It was a good thing to do because in a way that reputation was true. We do have more cool stuff. The PR person for the college of liberal arts and sciences works at a cruddy little desk with a crappy little computer, no Access Grid node. And I work in this lovely building with all this technology and a Herman Miller chair. It's just a whole difference in how it looks. Part of it is the national scope of what we all do. We're not just in our centers, we're dealing with people all across the country and all across the world. We get more exposure and we get more exposed to things. I really like that about my job. When I did SC communications I got two job offers just from being in that position. Just from having people see me. The one that I recently accepted was partly from that experience. It also gave my boss a chance to see me outside of my regular environment. I would agree with Joe in general that there are better career opportunities for those of us in the high-tech PR world.

Fawn

I have two points I'd like to make. In general, the more you know about technology and tools to do your PR role more effectively, the more marketable you are as a general rule. I think a lot of times PR people do fall in the laggard category, but if you can pull yourself out of that and realize that whether you're working in a high-tech company, or one that promotes bakery goods, the more high-tech you are, and the more tools you know how to use, the more marketable you are. Being effective in public relations is about using all of these tools to communicate effectively. You have to be pretty adept. Another thing that's important to remember is that when I go to my director and ask him for things that involve technology, usually the answer is yes pretty quickly. This is because they know the importance of technology. In other companies I've worked for I'll ask for something high-tech that I need to do my job better, and they'll say "No, do you really need that?" And I'll say "Yes, and here's my business case, here's what I can accomplish, here's how I can be more successful." And I get, "No, I don't think we need that right now." At the center I'm working at now, everything I've asked for, I've gotten, and that's pretty cool.

Kathy

Ask for more! (laughter)

Fawn

So I think that's probably a cultural difference not just at the technology centers, but at high-tech companies too, people are more willing to give you what you need and pay for it.

Researcher

Do you think that age or gender is a factor in adoption of technology?

Marta

In my experience women are more flexible.

Kathy

I would agree that women are more flexible in general.

Fawn

And open-minded. Sorry Joe.

Joe

I think it's true.

Kathy

Women have not had access to these tools for as long as men. We haven't been in this arena as long as men. They (men) have traditionally been the ones who create the technologies.

Beth

That's right.

Kathy

I did an interview a few years ago with Valerie Taylor in Texas about women in technology.

She told a story about because women haven't been involved in creating the technologies they

don't adopt them because it doesn't relate to how they do things. She gave the example of some of the first palm pilot organizer things where they compartmentalized your work life and home life. The problem was that most women really have to mesh the two, so they really didn't adopt those early PDAs as well. It was because the men were the ones creating the technologies.

Beth

They were made to fit in a shirt pocket.

Kathy

Right. Also, with cell phones, women don't always have something to clip this on.

Beth

I've seen that the big laggards that we've had are men. I can't think of any woman out there who is significantly behind the technology, but we have a number of men that are. These are the ones that think everything has to be on paper. I don't know if it's just because of the competitiveness that the women have to adopt the technology to stay competitive and the men maybe don't. All of the ones that we see that are set in their ways and don't want to adopt anything new are guys.

Joe

I have to answer to all of this don't I? (laughter)

Beth

There's your set up.

Joe

I don't see that, but what I do think is interesting is that the men get excited about the new toys just because it's a new toy. I do think that the open-mindedness that makes you consider new things is more common to women. What's interesting is that cell phones are the only thing that men sit around a table and talk about whose is smaller. (laughter) They always want that. They all want the latest toy whether they need it or not. But I think maybe the reason that there's more women in PR is because the PR agencies want to pay as little as possible. And they can get women for cheaper.

Fawn

Not in my world. I won't accept that.

Joe

I know, but that's traditionally been the way to do it.

Fawn

Maybe fifteen years ago. But not now.

Kathy

But it really hasn't changed that much. If you look at salaries for PR, they are cheap. If you look at a big organization, the PR Manager will probably make less than any of the other managers. It's less valued.

Beth

I know our PR people make a lot less than the people in the technical track.

Fawn

But that's whether it's men or women.

Kathy

Right. It's less valued overall.

Researcher

Can you now place yourselves on the charts? Compare yourself to people that we might meet in the general practitioner community.

Beth

During my career I did a pilot project with our graphic arts department back in '78 or '79. We were to teaching them to use computer graphics. This was when people were doing things by hand. This was at (unnamed high-tech organization) . So we got the one guy from graphic arts who was willing to come and learn. He had to come and sit with us because the other artists were so hostile to him as a traitor for using the computer. They finally found out that it was cost effective and they decided to use it. They set up a group that was called the computer graphics group. They put these people in a building, there were four of them. And they all used PCs. After a few years when the Mac software came out they all adopted it. So then they had the graphics group which all used Mac and the computer graphics group that all used PCs. Now the

people that were in that early project are now the managers of the graphics group. That did help their career because the others didn't use the computers until they were forced to. The ones that went in early are now the top managers in the graphics department.

Researcher

Does anybody have any comments before we close on anything that I should know or look at dealing with these topics?

Joe

When I worked at a PR agency, I never labeled myself as a PR account executive. I used to be a newspaper reporter, and I never wanted to be identified as a PR person. And now I'm a communications manager. But when you talk about PR I think that can really cover a wide range. It could be the agency folks who don't understand the clients real needs, or it could be the specialized folks who are on campus or whatever. I think you might want to be a little more focused on what kind of PR you're talking about. You might want to talk about research institutions or universities versus national laboratories, that might be a little more helpful. In the bay area the agencies probably are more tech savvy because everything there is so high-tech.

Kathy

I don't know if this is right, but my feeling is that maybe communications and PR people are a little more tech savvy than say your average sales executive. Communications and technology are so linked.

Fawn

PR is even more techy than a marketing or advertising person.

Kathy

Well, marketing and advertising maybe isn't as bad as sales. I have a good friend who is in sales and it's a real noticeable difference. I don't consider myself really that big of a geek, but she probably doesn't know what a blog is or a wiki or anything like that. If you go outside the communications realm, as well as outside of the high performance computing realm you'll see a big drop.

Joe

I have a couple of good friends who work at the Mercury News in the heart of Silicon Valley and their understanding of technology is way below me. I may be a laggard compared to the innovators I work with, but among the communications group I'm way ahead.

Fawn

I agree to be really specific on the groups. We all work for supercomputing centers. That's different than the PR people at universities.

Beth

None of us are selling anything.

Fawn

Even though I work for the University of (unnamed) , I'm a PR person for a supercomputing center. When I go to my monthly meeting with all the other PR folks from around campus I think I'm pretty different from them.

Researcher

Do you feel like you have a better career path because of that? Do you feel lucky to be the one that is at (unnamed high-tech organization) ?

Fawn

Actually I do feel like it helps me in my career. Part of being at the (unnamed high-tech organization) , we have our own way of doing things. We get away with doing things different with hiring. My salary is considerably higher than a person who is in PR for the college of liberal arts, or the college of journalism, or the college of nursing. We just do things differently and the university lets us. I do consider myself better off in that regard.

Beth

You have more national impact.

Fawn

Our budgets are bigger. We generate our own funding.

Kathy

In supercomputing centers at universities they tell the HR departments that we're competing against industry to recruit the best people. We really need to have higher salaries.

Fawn

But at the same time, I might one day want to be the director of public affairs for UT. There are other career paths at the university too.

Beth

Also the information that we're communicating is much more technical than what a general PR person communicates. It's not like, "We have a new version of bread this week, or we have a new model of mobile home." The stuff that we're communicating takes a lot to make it interesting and understandable for the general public.

Fawn

It takes a lot of effort to translate all of that.

Beth

I always refer to myself as a translator between the scientists and the rest of the world. I'm a translator.

Joe

I'm a University of California employee and if I moved down on campus to take a job there I'd take a 25% pay cut.

Researcher

Well that's all the time we have, thanks so much for participating.

## **Low-tech Focus Group**

(Much laughter and commotion.)

Researcher

Well first of all I'd like to thank you guys for coming. I'd like you to make yourselves comfortable. I'd like to tell you all a little bit about my research and then we can begin. The research as it stands shows two things. One is dealing with innovations in general. This little adoption curve that you have in front of you is the same thing that is pinned up here. What it shows is that basically the more time you spend with people who are innovative, the more likely you are to use certain technologies. So if you are buddies with someone who is really into computers, probably that person will have shown you something really cool and useful that you can use on your machine. This means that the closer you are to innovators, the more likely you are to have high-tech toys and find things useful that you can use too. When you're looking at the curve, remember that this represents the total population, not just people in public relations. This shows that innovators are 2.5%, just a small percent of people that are very close to the technology. They sometimes invent their own versions of the technology. These might be people that you know personally, or you might know them through acquaintances. You might think "Yeah my friend the computer guy... he knows someone who is a really serious innovator." Then there are early adopters who are close to the innovators and adopt technologies in the first 13.5% of a population, before everybody else. Then in the middle, of course, is the majority. The early majority adopts a little bit before the majority, the late majority adopts a little bit after the majority. And the laggards are the 16% of the population that will be the last ones to adopt. These laggards are often more traditional. People in the innovator category are very different. Sometimes they are a little scary to talk to, or hard to understand. People in the

early adopter category are sometimes the champions that will show other people in the early majority how to use a technology. So just remember when I say “adopting” a technology, I just mean using it. And when I refer to the curve, that’s just the total population. The other thing that we learned was that in public relations, the more your technology use, the higher your advancement in public relations. So the more you use technology, the higher your salary, (laughter from the graphic designer, Jessica . She whispers- That’s not true!)...

the better your role in the organization, which means your position, the more power you have to make decisions, to influence people, to have advancement, so this is what the literature shows right now, the more technology you use, the better off your career in public relations. This is specific to public relations, whereas (pointing to the diffusion of innovations curve) this is more general. So we know that generally, where you have a close proximity to innovators, the more technology you use. So my question is – and this is what we’re going to be talking about- if you put these two things together, you would think that - and maybe this is right maybe this is not right, we’ll find out after I finish with my thesis- but you would think that the more exposure you have to innovators, the more career advancement you would have in PR. Because here (pointing to the diffusion of innovations curve) it shows that if you are exposed to innovators, you’re going to have high-technology use. And here it shows that if you have high-technology use, you’ll have career advancement in PR. So I want to fill in that blank and either prove or disprove that the more PR people spend time with innovators, the better their salaries, roles, power, the more career advancement opportunities they’ll have. So that’s the kind of topics that we’ll be talking about, and I have about 30 questions here, but we’ll end the focus group in an hour regardless of whether the 30 questions are answered, we’re just going to kind of go through that. And you’re welcome to talk with each other, talk to me. I’ll be facilitating it, but I don’t want to do much of the talking, I just want to throw a question out there and let you guys throw it back and forth

until I say “let’s move on,” or “how about this?” So in the beginning we’ll talk about just some general questions about innovations, then we’ll talk about innovators that you might know, then we’ll talk about public relations practitioners as adopters, or users of technology, and then we’ll talk about more specifically how does technology affect your career, does it make you more efficient, and things like that, so that’s the kind of outline that I have for us. I have some timing notes, so that I know when to move on. We’re going to try to keep it interesting and fast moving so we can all get something out of this. Hopefully you guys will get something that’s useful out of the discussion, where you’ll say “Hey, that sounds like a cool technology that so and so is using. Yes, Raynie.

Raynie

Are you going to basically tell us what kinds of technology you’re talking about like blogs, and..  
?

Researcher

Those things will probably come up. I want to hear what you guys have to say, but I do plan to ask the question of “what technologies are you using that other people might not be using?” or “what technologies have you heard of other people using that you haven’t used yet?”

Jessica

Do you want us to answer with only technologies that we use at work, or both work and personal?

Researcher

Good question. Ernie asked the same question earlier. I am mostly looking for what you are using at work, because this is about PR. And if there are some technologies that you haven't used yet, but you've heard of and you think would be useful in your work, I'd be interested in hearing about that because it may be one of these emerging technologies that we just haven't figured out yet. Another thing that I'm trying to learn is are there differences in different groups of PR people. So you may say, "I wonder if a PR person ever used this," and then later on in my studies I may find, "well there was that one person, and he works for NASA, and he says that he did use that, isn't that interesting." That would show that there were similarities in your prediction and in what really happened. Everything that you say – I'm using you guys as the experts. You're working in the field, you're working in public relations every day. I'm using you as experts on the topic, so don't feel like you have to know the research, or you have to agree with the research, you can tell me the truth. Because this research, Jessica says is not true. (laughter) So maybe she knows better. You guys are the experts. I'm just looking for information so that you guys can help me figure out some information about technology use in PR. About what's useful and what's not useful. Ok, I'm supposed to define some terms for you guys, so when I say "innovation" I mean any new technology or tool that helps you to do your job. When I say "innovator" I'll be talking about these people who adopt technologies first. I'm sure you know some people who know just about everything dealing with the latest innovations, and they are very close to the pulse of what is going on with what products are new in the marketplace. You might interact directly with them, that's "innovators." And then you have the diffusion of innovations bell curve, which we've already talked about, basically with an innovation, some people adopt early, some people adopt late, and it just depends on a lot of

things, their personality characteristics, what's useful to them, things like that. So our first question for discussion. What technologies are you using in your PR job and why?

Raynie

A computer... email..

(laughter)

Researcher

Alright, anything else?

Joni

Word processing

Eddie

Tape recorder. I have an old tape recorder. I think Roy has a digital tape recorder.

Researcher

And you use that for interview recording? (Roy nodding) Anyone use technology for research?

Jade

Well yeah. The Internet.

Researcher

What do you use the Internet for?

Jade

To research clients, to get information. And I also use it to try and keep abreast of the technology itself, and blogs, or just understanding how the Internet's evolving in terms of how that affects how I communicate with my clients.

Researcher

So far two of you have mentioned blogs, is anybody else using blogs?

Jessica

For work?

Researcher

Yeah, for work.

Jessica

No, it's on my list.

Researcher

Is it something that you're using in your personal life, though? Is it something that is emerging that may be a new tool?

Jessica

I read them, I don't write them.

Researcher

Yeah.

Jade

I've written. I'll write on them sometimes, but I don't publish one though.

Researcher

Does everyone know what a blog is, by the way? (Joni shaking her head "no".)

It's a Web log. It's just a Website that's like a journal. You go online and you say, "today I went to the store and it was fun.. or today I ..."

Joni

So it's not where you talk back and forth with people like instant messenger?

Eddie

Well, kind of. You actually start the journal and then people write comments afterwards and you can write comments, but it's not necessarily a message board, it's similar to that.

Jade

The ones that I frequent are design blogs, the main have articles, they'll have one that's by a group of a lot of some of the partners at Pentagram and they publish articles and it stimulates conversation and interaction ideas can form out of this discussion about what's going on in the world as it relates to design. And what role designers have and so that's one application. I see it

as a trend spotting thing. Early adopters are out there surfing the Web and looking for public input on their blogs and see that spiral kind of communication. So they're I think in the early adopting stage and acting quickly. So as a PR person, I just feel compelled to keep an eye on that. Now for a university, we're kind of in that laggards category. It would be a while before I think we'd be in this position.

Jessica

Are you going to survey people in different areas of PR? Because it would be interesting to compare us, or city state workers, to people who have money. (laughter) I mean it would. Because I'm a Web designer, and if I worked at a company that said, "give me your innovative ideas, and we will publish them," then we'd have a blog on the homepage. We would have video on the homepage.

Researcher

So you're saying corporate public relations practitioners are different than state practitioners?

Jessica

Yes

Jade

Yes

Researcher

In what way?

Jessica

Money.

Researcher

For?

Jessica

Resources.

Researcher

For technology you mean? You don't have as much technology as you would if you were working in a private corporation?

Eddie

There's a different turnaround in getting things accomplished.

Jade

It's more about execution, mobility..

Eli

Actually the technology is pretty good.

Joni

I know Jim (photographer, mac enthusiast, and office technology coordinator) whenever he buys computers or whatever for here, he usually tries to wait until they get the bugs worked out of it before buying it, but he usually tries to keep ahead of what's out there.

Researcher

Eli, you use a lot of technology, what do you think about the situation you're in right now? Do you feel like you're using what other videographers in business are using?

Eli

We pretty much have to wait to catch up

I'd like to be ahead of where I am but It's got to integrate with other software and that sort of thing. You've got to be careful not to be too quick. You've got to

Jessica

I don't feel we're behind in the hardware software area at all. I just feel we're behind in the resources. If we wanted to do a campaign that was very innovative and technology savvy, if we don't have enough people here, an outside business could hire someone.

Raynie

It's also about training. Businesses have a way of saying, we don't have this technology but now we can buy it but we have to have somebody to train someone and so that's that. And of course you've got other smaller technologies that not all of us are using, I know a lot of people have blackberries, and I could see how that could be extremely important for PR people in terms of

you're connected at all times, so you can be working at all times with it, so blackberries can also be kind of important.

Researcher

So is that technology still emerging, Raynie?

Raynie

Oh yeah.

Jessica

Now they're putting video on them.

Raynie

You can watch TV on it, you can put video on it, there's a lot of stuff. And after a while, you're probably going to be able to advertise on it. It's just unbelievable what's going to end up happening.

Researcher

What other technologies have you guys heard of that you think would be cool to use, that you are not using yet?

Eddie

Well that's why...

Jessica

iPod Video - sorry. For our recruiting videos we could partner up with iPod and put videos on their network, that'd be cool.

Eddie

The one technology that we do use, we all instant message each other. But when I asked earlier about whether this was for work or outside, I was thinking about podcasting. Because I haven't done any at work but I've seen a lot online, and I've listened to podcasts at home just for different topics.

Jessica

We could even have our professors podcasting.

Eddie

I've even thought about the chancellor doing some kind of, instead of doing a "town talk" we could load up a podcast and ...

Joni

Ok, what's podcasting?

Eddie

It's like a radio show kind of.

Jade

Anybody can take their recorder and record articles or whatever they want to say, upload it onto iTunes, and it's a podcast, and people download those podcasts onto their mp3 players.

Joni

Are a lot of people doing this? Can anybody do this?

Jade

You can put it on your Website.

Eddie

It's just an mp3.

Raynie

It's just a matter of putting it in a format that you can download.

Eddie

Everybody has their own section of podcasts.

Jade

They're the early adopters.

Raynie

I've thought about GPS tracking, we would love it if we could do some kind of GPS tour. Lots of campuses...

Researcher

Have you seen other PR practitioners using GPS?

Raynie

No.

Researcher

So this is an original idea?

Raynie

I read it in a trade journal.

Jessica

And what's the purpose of doing that?

Raynie

Well basically, number one, someone could come here and without using a printed piece, walk in and walk around our campus with maybe some headphones and at a certain time when they reach a certain place they receive a signal and they hear "turn to the left" and "here's the memorial tower" and that kind of stuff.

Jessica

Yeah, that would be pretty neat.

Researcher

What about video conferencing? Have you guys ever used that before?

Jade

I saw the new imac, and that would be so cool, they have the camera built right in!

Eddie

I did it before at UL.

Joni

Is that kind of like the distance learning where they do classes taught here and somewhere else?

Researcher

Yes, It's real time video interaction. Ernie, you said you've used this before?

Eddie

Well we did a couple of different ones. We were working with this company out of Virginia when I was at UL. And we did one where it was just basically going into an online chatroom where you can hear audio and they can upload powerpoints and stuff at the same time and go through the same powerpoint slides while you hear the audio. And then I also went to a presentation in Shreveport with the chamber of commerce, and we didn't do the video

conferencing, but they showed me all of their technologies that had the ability to do it and they had like a TV studio in their conference room so they could do all the video conferencing.

Female

It's mind boggling.

Eli

They're actually doing that at (unnamed high-tech organization) with HD.

Raynie

I mean if you wanted to announce that you're going to have a press conference that, wow, you could essentially say we're having a press conference and there are some people in Germany that want to tap into the press conference, that's huge.

Eddie

One thing that happened here, I guess the first month I started was a phone teleconference of a certain PR topic and you dial in the number listed, and you can send in questions through email, and they can answer questions, so you just listen through the phone.

Joni

I did some training like that on a thing where we can get our flights, a travel arranging thing.

Raynie

Online training, like Webinars.

Roy

I would love to do more for press conferences. The other day we had a press conference and we invite all these people who have papers from different areas where they have papers but they can't really afford to send their people, like Monroe. They did an article, but they couldn't send their guy down here. But if we could've had something online, the news crew could just watch it and get the information they need. And maybe send in their own questions or something like that.

Researcher

I'm wondering why you do or don't use technologies. What are the benefits, or what are the decision makers, is it cost? What are you looking for when you're trying to figure out if you're going to use something or not?

Jessica

For me it goes back to resources. Because we have fabulous ideas around this table, but then it comes down to, "ok who is going to implement this? Who is going to maintain it?" And then you get bogged down into your everyday workflow, and it's like "oh yeah, I wanted to do that, but that means I have to maintain it. Or I have to find the stories or I have to find ...

Eli

I've gotten into a lot of places where the cooler the technology is, the harder it is to use. A lot of times it's more complex. Because it works so great people think it should just happen like that. Unfortunately a lot of things are more complicated than you think and require more time.

Jessica

Well this one idea we had is to have current students write journals, and post it on the site, and it's just their everyday something they did, and they take pictures and they upload them. Which is a great idea, but we'd have to find the students and make sure they're doing it and somebody would actually have to maintain that. It's like when we started doing "highlights" and that's a big job.

Raynie

But don't you think Jessica that if we said that we want a podcast, we want to start ... I think we would get support for doing it, it's just that something else would suffer. Like your current workload would have to be redesigned in order to bring this technology in there.

Jessica

Well we could tap into other resources on campus, we could find professors who were interested in being the leader of something, and we could make sure that the technology is there for them to tap into. We could do that if the initial, doing the research and talking to computing services and ...

Roy

You're talking about something like doing blogs. I know a long time ago I talked with JD about doing a research blog, but that's a lot of extra work. I mean you've got to find the professor make sure he is willing to do it, stay on top of it, make sure especially with PR you're talking about making sure it doesn't say anything you don't want it to say, or link to something you don't want it to link to.

Jessica

And you don't want it to be old.

Roy

Yeah. You don't want it to just sit there without anyone updating it.

Jessica

That's what I find. In the beginning people are excited and you have to have one person who says "ok, it's time to change these photos," or "it's time to do this." And it's that one person who has to have the time to keep it going.

Raynie

Yeah, just think how long it took us to adopt the Web highlights. (laughter) it was hard to adopt it.

Roy

Well with (unnamed low-tech organization) Wire we just got around to doing the survey. Just for the survey itself I had to find the time to put it together, get everyone to sign off on it, and then do it. And then it got interrupted by a hurricane. So it's a long lag time between getting something done.

Researcher

Roy, what is the term for that? Is it like an online news service? What is (unnamed low-tech organization) Wire in your words?

Roy

An email newsletter.

Researcher

Ok, I'd like to move on to talk about...

Roy

I have a question before you move on. When you say "use" a technology what do you mean?

I'm not blogging, and we're not blogging, but there's someone in mass comm who studies how you can use blogs to get messages out and stuff like that. You send stuff directly to bloggers and it's like it's own form of media.

Researcher

And have you done that yet?

Roy

No, we haven't done that yet, but first we have to do the research and find out who the bloggers are in our area that might make a difference.

Eddie

Well, one thing that was kind of funny during the storm (hurricane Katrina) we were working on all these news stories, news media stories, and our own student worker, Joel Brusley was going on CNN or whatever because he was blogging about the hurricane. He was putting all of our information on his blog about what was going on on campus and he was getting attention.

Researcher

Were we sending him that information?

Eddie

No. He was in the office, so he would get it here.

Roy

Or he would get it off line, off our Website.

Researcher

So this was something that was beneficial, but it wasn't necessarily planned.

Roy

It's just an example of something that you could do if you target bloggers.

Eddie

This is an example of what we talked about when Dr. Sands mentioned it, new media and blogging and stuff. And he (Joel Brusley) was already doing it. He already had a blog and he just happened to decide that he was going to post all (unnamed low-tech organization) news about the hurricane, and then people started reading about it and he got a lot of attention. We even found out news from him.

Joni

So that's where that rumor of civil unrest came from (laughter). How do you find a blog?

Jade

Bloggers will link to other blogs and

Eddie

It's just a big network of

Raynie

Oh that's another thing, you know how you can sign up for, um, I don't know what it's called but Rochelle and I are signed up for if anything or any articles would have anything to do with (unnamed low-tech organization), or university business, now that's great it comes right to your door, you don't have to find it. It can be about marketing communications. What is that called "SRS ?" (RSS feeds)

Roy

I don't know but there are a lot of things like that.

Researcher

A subscription email list.

Raynie

Right.

Roy

Well there's even free stuff. I started using Google alerts just to keep up with news. You just put in whatever you want.

Maggie

We also used, (laughing) this is kind of primitive, but we used the walkie talkies during our crisis communication efforts, and where are we on that satellite uplink at the mass comm. school?

Roy

I don't know if we have access to it or not.

Eli

We have it there. What it is right now is a connection. They have a fiber connection from there through Cox to LPB or to channel 2. They can do it right now.

Roy

That's why we're not in control of it. We can't just do it any time we want.

Eli

You have to make sure that they are able to uplink.

Researcher

Now I'd like to talk a little bit about the innovators that you know. And learn from you how you tell if someone is an innovator, and what kind of interaction you have with them. So does anyone here know any innovators?

Raynie

I don't think I know any. The 2.5 % of the population is pretty small.

Olinka

Yes

Raynie

I don't know anybody who is creating their own programs and ...

Olinka

I do. He's a Web developer here in town, and he does that he writes code. For the shopping network when they were here for a while and he writes for them. He is real innovative, have you ever been to his Website?

Jessica

No.

Raynie

But is he really an early adopter, though? When you think of innovative, you are thinking of people who can probably see what the future holds.

Olinka

He's a little more than that because he actually knows how- he'll write it, he'll get stuff that somebody else has already done and he'll re-write it.

Jessica

Are you asking if we know anybody that thinks "hmm, how can I do this better," and then just comes up with something brand new?

Researcher

I think that's part of it, I think innovators are people who stay close to the cutting edge of what's new. The person that you might hear about a new product from before anybody else. A person who you might hear about something you've never heard of before and you have to say, "wait a minute, explain that in my own terms."

Jessica

Jim is someone who does that.

Researcher

Have you ever, when you are interacting with Jim, have you ever thought "if he could show me how to use something that would be beneficial to me, then I would use it for sure, but he has to

show me.” This is what I’m looking for, the transfer of information from one person to another.

Don’t worry so much about the definition of an innovator, I’m interested in learning about a time when you were with an innovative person, forget about the label, and they showed you a technology.

Raynie

Forget the label, I’m a laggard! (laughter)

Researcher

You feel like you’re a laggard?

Raynie

I am a laggard when it came to the whole mp3 stuff.

Researcher

Ok.

Raynie

And then all of a sudden one day I bought an mp3 player, and Jason and Rochelle showed me all this stuff, and it rocked my world, and now it’s all I do. (laughing) but it took someone else to show me.

Researcher

They showed you how it was useful.

Raynie

Yeah, but then it was in a matter of, I'd say a day, and then we just hit it off. It's like you and eBay! Remember that?

Eddie

Yeah, the first time you ever use eBay, and you're on there every day for the..

Jessica

And you have to set a maximum limit or you get in trouble! You buy a cute little smock dress for \$41, and you're like, "I could've got that for.." (laughter)

Joey

Smock dress?

Joni

I don't like eBay. I just do not.

Raynie

You adopt pretty quickly at that point.

Jessica

Yes. And I

Maggie

I think it opens you up to new things because you're not as afraid if you have someone that helps you and shows you, and you're like "oh, I'll try this, and I've got them to help me out in case." Even just working on your computer, I think it takes away some of that fear of "am I gonna crash the whole computer?" and you'll go into something in safe mode to try something. I think it makes you a little bit braver.

Joni

Makes you more confident.

Maggie

Yeah.

Jessica

Yeah, I try to come up with new and innovative ideas for the Web, but I find that I am not the type of person that will go and search new technology sites and say "ooh, what's about to happen," once I start hearing about it or I'm searching other sites and I'm clicking on things and I think "what is this? What are they doing here?" someone else has to do it and then I can improve upon it, or I think, "how can I implement this into what I am doing?" to make it a little different.

Researcher

So it's not necessarily a person who shows it to you,

Jessica

I do both. The first time I heard about blogs and iPod casts, I just happened to hear about it in the hall. And I was like, “oh yeah, I need to check that out.” I have iTunes, and I have an iPod, but I just never went in there. Because I’m not the type of person that just – I’d see the cast on there, and I would think, “I have no idea what that is,” and I would just keep on going with my work. And until someone says how they are using it in their life, I’m like “oh yeah, I could use that as well.”

Researcher

It sounds like you guys interact with some innovative people, but you’re kind of not sure that they are in that 2.5% of the population. Does anybody disagree? Besides Olinka, I know she has a connection with someone who she feels like really is that innovator type. Does anybody else have a connection with someone that they think is an innovator?

Maggie

I think I do. It’s my cousin who is an I.T. guy for Regions bank, so he kind of has to stay on top of it, but not as far as from a PR aspect.

Researcher

If he would show you something that you thought would be useful to you, would you use it?

Maggie

Um hmm.

Jessica

I know when I go to a conference, that's my favorite thing, when I go to a conference, because I think they are innovators, and they are the people who are staying on top of it, and you go to a conference, and you see this new stuff and they show you how they implemented it into their work flow, and then you do come back to your office and then you're like "ah, I found these cool things," and you start telling your coworkers and you start implementing it. So I think conferences for me, are what excite me and get me to bring that back to work.

Raynie

And also ease of use of the technology, if I start something and it's either really complicated, or they don't explain what you need to do very well. I get very fed up pretty quickly and I'll just shut that down and go, "well I couldn't figure that out."

Olinka

I think most people that are in the graphic design field are at least early adopters or early majority because we have to learn illustrator upgrades to software or you have to learn a new Web building software, we're the ones that are going to do that first. And we talk a lot, looking at ideas. I know you all do. When your friends are designers you just say, "let me show you this cool trick." And so we're always, we're not just using it, we're using it before anybody else.

Jade

I think that's true. I also think that I've learned to look at people who are actually interacting with or using design to find out where there's room for innovation. Because the people that are not designers are the ones who will say, "this isn't working for me, so I'm going to do it this

way.” And they are the ones that are forging new ground. So I kind of see myself as somebody who is poised to catch those instances of innovation and execute. To kind of adapt to make that available.

Researcher

Do you feel like you’re having some kind of interaction with innovators, maybe not...

Jade

Yeah, it’s not necessarily people I know it’s just observing and design is moving in that direction and it’s very based on anthropology, sociology and social interaction because innovation is happening by the people that are using and actively solving in their everyday lives.

Jessica

Well I find that PR people, or the ones that I have contact with, are usually one of the first to ask “well why not?” or “how are you using this?” or “Are you doing it that way?” When we ask those types of questions then we can help communicate the message. And by asking those questions we may be an early adopter or even an innovator. If you’re asking questions like “well why isn’t that working for you?” And then you have to go back and do research and say ok, this is how I figured out it may work for you. So I do think we’re on that side of the bell curve as PR people.

Researcher

Jessica, what I am hearing you say is that PR people could be sort of opinion leaders and ask the questions that could influence other people even if they’re not on the edge of the innovation.

Jessica

Yeah. It may not be the person who sits down and writes the program. The program may exist and Raynie says, “this is too hard, I’m too frustrated, this isn’t working for me,” and closes the program. As a PR person I could ask her “well what was hard about it? what would you want to use it for?” and I’d say, “If you understood it, would you use it, and she’d say “yes, yes yes,” and we could go back to the people who write the programs and say “this is what I found out, this is how they would use it, this is the final message to communicate.” And so I think we’re right there, or we could be right there with the innovators in helping to get everyone on the same page. Get the communication the same.

Joey

I agree. I think that’s our job. I work with a lot of innovators at (unnamed high-tech organization) , and the problem I think with that 2.5 % is that they’re not communicators. They don’t know how to communicate with people who are outside of that 2.5%, or the 2.5% to 7%. And so as PR professionals, you have to be in that early adopter to early majority section to be able to communicate with them, but also to communicate with everyone else who is behind you from the late majority to laggards. To put the technology in a way that they can understand, so it can be beneficial. Because that’s another problem is that a lot of times we don’t seek out new technology because we haven’t been shown how it can benefit us. A need hasn’t been identified.

Jessica

You mean for a lay person?

Joey

Even if you look at people like us. You didn't know about podcasts, but you didn't have a need.

Now a use or a need has been identified and you're interested.

Eli

One of the interesting things about the technology is how you develop that. You've got all these technologies and they're really cool, but sometimes you've got to figure out how it could be useful.

Roy

I think this directly relates to what we're doing because every day you're asking what's the best way to get to this message out, whatever message that is. And that a lot of times ties in to what technology are you going to use. And sometimes it takes a lot of logistics, but that also leads to the part where you start asking, "is there a better way? Is there something new here we could do?" and that leads to discovery.

Researcher

I'm wondering if we're talking about people who can convince us of things, and people who are good communicators and bad communicators. Do you feel like you would be more likely to adopt a technology if someone who was close to your field like another practitioner showed you the technology as opposed to someone who was in that 2.5% of innovators category? You've got, number one, your colleague in public relations, and number two, the person who invented it himself, and one of these people is going to convince you, who is more likely to convince you?

Raynie

Number one, the PR person.

---

Jessica

Well, yeah, it's the marketing actually, that does it. If it's on the news, if it's like this hot new thing that everyone's talking about. I really think it's the marketing. I mean if you take for example, the new iPod Video that's coming out. It's all over the news. Their marketing department has done a good job marketing that. We all know about the iPod Video. Now your highlight that was on Grid technology is amazing, but it's not in the main stream that much, because they don't have a marketing person talking about Grid technology. I saw a commercial the other day, and this guy was driving his car and he's singing children's songs and his phone rings, and it's this service person saying, "hey you need to come in for a tune up," and he's like "how did you know that?" Well his car talked to the dealer, and that's Grid technology, that's exactly what was in your highlight. And it's just now getting into mainstream in a commercial. But it's not like the iPod, because I just don't think it has that level of language that people would understand, and it needs a whole marketing campaign to make it in the main stream.

Raynie

Yeah, it's got to be... Like right now with the iPod, it's showing video and right now I'm like, "what would I need or want that for?" And somebody would have to say, "oh, well you could be on a plane and you could watch your own movie on your iPod." And I would go, "oh, ok, that's pretty cool."

Jessica

And see, I'm thinking the opposite way, I'm thinking what can I, how can I market a message with that? Because my first thought was if we could partner with iPod, or if you could load your recruiting video through your welcome message, or something about the hurricane, if the chancellor had a message about the hurricane, it could be uploaded and people could download personal, like a podcast, I'd want all the videos about (unnamed low-tech organization), and you could download these mini videos.

Jade

I think that what we're describing is something that was talked about in the Tipping Point. There's the innovator and there's the "maven" and that's the connector or facilitator spreading that innovation. I think that we're more mavens than innovators. I think the innovator is the person that will do the podcasting. But helping people understand how to use it.

Joey

I think the innovator has the respect though. You respect him because of his intelligence as an information source. So they're actually the ones who spread it because they're so all knowing or whatever. But it's the maven or early adopter who actually is the one using the technology and who appreciates it.

Jessica

I think that it does have to be somebody that we trust. Because I have had people talk to me about technology and it's way over my head. And then I've had another person talk to me about technology and they can relate it to my life. Then I'm like oh!

Jade

That's the power of a blog. You can show people "Hey I've got my new iPod Video and it's great." You know, and all of my friends and family are reading it and maybe their friends and family are reading it too. It's that marketing that starts that.

Raynie

Is it iPod that starts it? (laughing)

Joni

I'm trying to relate this to my life, and my family. And Billy says he wants to get one of these high definition TVs. But those things are expensive. So cost plays a big role here in whether people are going to adopt something.

Eddie

You know, I was looking at the news the other day and they're going to be coming out with these new HD DVDs. So now we've got these new DVDs and people are wondering what happens to all their old DVDs. Now that VHS tapes are basically non-existent, regular DVDs are going to be less popular too.

Joni

Yeah, they don't make eight tracks anymore!

Jessica

The TV stations were lagging behind for a while because they thought “Well who is going to buy these TVs anyway? I don’t need to upgrade my station.” And so there were stations here in town that aren’t ready for HD but now that 2006 is coming they have to because that was their deadline. And so I think they had to be forced.

Eli

In Japan it took off a few years ago and now everybody there has it.

Jade

I guess building that network is what has to happen before it reaches that point. But the fact is that the machine by itself is worthless. You know, everybody has to catch on it’s the same thing with TVs or the Internet or whatever.

Jessica

That’s why I’ve never bought a video conferencing camera for my computer. It’s because nobody I know has a camera that I can talk to.

Jade

Well if I get one will you get one?

Jessica

Yeah!

Researcher

Well, one thing I'd like to talk about is the public relations practitioner population as adopters. What about these PR people who work in organizations that are extremely high-tech? PR people who work at NASA or Intel, or Apple or another place that might invent the technology that we talk about. Do you think that those PR practitioners have a different career experience because of their proximity to innovators?

Jessica

Well this is just my opinion, of course. But we work at a university, so we have free class. Not everyone takes advantage of the free classes. Because of that, all that I can assume is that it depends on the individual. Some people may take advantage of adopting the technology for their own lives, and some people might not. I think it depends on the individual.

Raynie

I think that PR people who are good generalists as opposed to specialists are going to be the ones who move up. Now if you are working for NASA, you're going to have tons of specialists all around you. Not only in PR, but in all these other areas. I think if you can understand the broad picture and you're a good manager and you know a little about a lot of things, you probably have a very good chance to create a team of specialists. Who are going to help your company and help you. So I think a person who is good at doing that is probably going to get the seat at the management table and a higher salary. Technology use is important, but I think if you have technology specialists around you, you've got the means and the ability to do a lot of things. It's like being the President. The President doesn't have to know everything about domestic policy and international policy, but he's got to have specialists all around him who do.

Researcher

Are you saying that these PR people who work in high-tech organizations don't necessarily know more about technology than other PR people? They just hire specialists who do know about it?

Raynie

Yes, I think that's highly likely. I don't think it's possible to know everything there is to know about technology but you'll eventually adopt a little bit of it. And if you're working in the field of technology, those kinds of industries may pay more throughout the organization. And therefore it trickles down to the PR professional.

Jade

I think it depends on whether the innovation that they've adopted early succeeds or not. The majority of innovations that come out fail. So if you're the first person on the deck of a sinking ship, then you're not doing too good!

Roy

One advantage is that if you work at a company like that you can throw a bunch more things against the wall to see if it sticks. You have more of an ability to experiment.

Jessica

Raynie made a very good point that I think we should focus on. And I don't want to offend anybody with this, but I'm a Web person, so let's just say that I'm more tech savvy than Raynie

or somebody who does more marketing and PR and doesn't do as much tech stuff and innovative stuff as I may. But she, as a savvy PR person knows how to surround herself with the right people. I think it's more the well rounded type PR person who's going to get the higher salary, the better role, and the more power. I don't necessarily think that you can take one area like technology, or public speaking, or these different areas of PR and think that's what's going to make you succeed. And I think she made a very good point, because I may be the high-technology PR person, but it doesn't mean I will succeed because I don't have all of the other great qualities like Raynie does.

Raynie

I think that by virtue of working in the tech field though, that sometimes you're still going to be worth more.

Jessica

Someone like Raynie may not know how to set up a Web log, but she's smart enough to know that she needs to have somebody like Joey or me on her team who can do that for her. She'll know that she needs one, but she doesn't need to know how to create it. For me, as a PR practitioner, I would know how to do it myself. I don't have the well rounded skills to get a seat at the table.

Raynie

A PR person needs to have the financial background too to create a budget and get that seat at the management table. That's what we're all trying to do. When you have a general idea and you know a little bit about a lot of things, that's what I think is going to help you.

Researcher

Do you think it has something to do with the individual? Like age, gender, socioeconomics?

Raynie

I think there are a lot of older people who adopt technology, but I may know only ten or so, where I probably know a hundred young people who know a lot about technology. I think it does take a person who is flexible and ready for new things.

Joni

Well when you're a kid, everybody is trying to share what's cool.

Roy

Young people tend to do more things on impulse and do what's cool. Where older people tend to think, "Is this really useful? Is it worth my time? Is this going to be popular?"

Maggie

My question is, are the younger people now going to still be innovative when they get older? In thirty years, will older people be more tech savvy? I think it's a lot to do with personality. I think that people who are less scared and maybe a little less organized, a little less analytical will be more likely to adopt. I think personality has a lot more to do than age. So I do think that over time older people will be more innovative.

Researcher

Does gender have anything to do with it?

Joey

I think it does. I've never come into contact with a tech person who's been female.

Eddie

You hear a lot of commercials now trying to convince young girls to get involved with science and technology since there's such a lack there.

Raynie

What about culture?

Roy

Well yeah, people in different countries like Japan can be much earlier to adopt too.

Eddie

I used to work for the Center for Information and Technology, and 28 out of 30 student workers were from India. These were all very smart techy people, Web designers...

Eli

I think it's culture and education.

Eddie

You hear a lot of older people that say, "I'll get my son to help me set that up, or I'll get my kid to fix that for me."

Jessica

I think many people in management are older and they come to the young people for creative and innovative ideas. But I don't see that many young people in management.

Researcher

I'd like to look at some examples of how technology has helped any of you in your careers.

Does anyone have an example of that?

Roy

I think technology helps a lot in what we do. For media relations we do everything through email now. It really speeds up production.

Eli

It definitely makes you more efficient but it creates a problem too because everybody expects so much more out of you.

Eddie

Yeah, people expect that we can have video and photos instantly and it puts a lot of pressure on people.

Eli

Technology can bog you down and you can have a problem that will cost you days solving the problem.

Roy

It creates management problems where the managers want things done right now.

Eddie

We're so dependant on technology that if your power point slides don't work, everybody freaks out.

Researcher

Where do you think you think PR practitioners in general fall on the chart?

Roy

I'd say as a whole the profession is probably late majority.

Maggie

I think more early majority.

Roy

Well if you look at the ideas versus the practice that's where it's different. I think PR people have a lot of ideas about technology, but to actually do it is a different thing. I think there's a lag time between talking about it and doing it.

Jessica

The reason I think that is, is because PR people are so conscious of bad publicity that they are afraid to take fast steps. They wait to see who else will do it first. I think they are late majority because of that.

Roy

Yeah, a lot of PR people are still reluctant to use blogs and podcasts. These things haven't come full force yet.

Eli

I would agree that PR is probably in the late majority.

Olinka

I guess I'm thinking more of advertising, but I think they are pretty innovative.

Jade

I don't think advertising people are innovative. I think they are behind. I think they're still stuck in television. TIVO is out there now, and TV is not innovative anymore for ads. I think the larger the organization is, the more so they are behind.

Raynie

I think that the PR people want to be ahead and catch up. I think they're trying to keep up.

Roy

But they look at the majority to see what is innovative before they join in.

Eddie

Looking at it from my department's standpoint, it's all about the audience that we speak to.

Some of the newspapers and radio stations we deal with in media relations still need us to fax them information. They can't even open the digital files to look at them.

Joey

Those people are the laggards, you can't let that drive you.

Eddie

But they drive our department.

Joey

These little hometown newspapers drive your department? To me, I think you have to be ahead of the people you are trying to communicate with.

Jessica

I disagree. Because with the Website we are designing it for the majority of monitors, and even though the new size was more innovative, we have to design for the majority.

Joey

But part of our job is to establish a need if there isn't a need there.

Eddie

You can't really be ahead of the consumer.

Jade

They are the majority. They are in charge and they're controlling what we do.

Roy

I think that is a factor as to what drags PR people down. You're playing to a certain audience and the budget plays a factor too. We'd love to do all this cool stuff, but that would take all this money from the budget and it's only going to reach a small number of people. So we're going to stick with the tried and true methods.

Jade

An individual can be in the early adopter category, but the group isn't that way.

Eli

It can also present a problem when you adopt too early and you can't deliver. For example, we've been shooting in HD for two years, but we can't really use it because nobody else does HD right now.

Joey

But you've adopted it.

Eli

Yeah, we've adopted it, but we're not able to really use it.

Jessica

But Joey, you also have to break it down into the field you're in. I think PR people in high-tech environments like you're in at the technology center may be early adopters, but the field in general is not. Like with instant messenger, you may have instant messenger and you may want to contact me that way, but if I don't have mine turned on, you're out of luck in that way.

Joey

I think you have to be above that majority to talk to everyone behind you.

Jessica

But you're talking in theory now. Yeah, in theory PR people should be early majority, but in actuality it's not that way.

Roy

There've always been innovative firms and innovative people, but as a whole it's a conservative environment. For a variety of reasons everything is a little slower. Like "Let's make sure this is something we want to do. Let's make sure this is an investment we want to make." When you're talking about PR as a whole we're actually a bit slow to start doing these things.

Jessica

When I started learning Flash, for the Flash CD, I called everyone in the state to see who was using it, and apparently (unnamed low-tech organization) was one of the first to do that. But we still haven't used it on our homepage. It's not that we're not able to do it, it's that only thirty percent of computers are able to use Flash. Now, ninety seven percent of computers are using flash, so we'll start to use it. But does that make me an early adopter? No. I'm late majority because we could've done this five years ago. But the market wasn't ready then.

Roy

When I lived in Atlanta, there were a lot of high-tech companies and there was this high-tech ad agency that was doing all this cool stuff. But they went out of business. They were too far ahead of the curve and it didn't work out.

Raynie

I wonder if they went into business now, how they would do?

Jade

They'd probably still be five years ahead of their audience and go out of business again!

(laughter)

Researcher

I know we have to close, we're so far out of time now, but thank you so much for your ideas and your time. This has been great.

## **Greg Domain Interview**

Researcher

The information I learn from you today will help me to gain a better understanding of how my research topic relates to practitioners in the field. Your answers will help me to complete my thesis research in public relations and technology. The focus of the research is to learn about what influences practitioners to use new technologies, and how these technologies affect their careers. Research has shown that practitioners have used technology to move up in their careers, and I want to dig a little deeper on that topic to find out how innovation can help our profession. I'm looking forward to hearing your input on this topic, so thank you again for agreeing to help me. Your feedback will give me valuable information for my research. One of the things I am trying to get to is whether the time you spend with innovators affects your career. Whether you think that the time spent with the innovators is making you more like them. First let's get some things covered. Your participation here is totally confidential and voluntary, so if you need to drop out for any reason during the interview, that is fine. In this discussion we will talk about how new innovations diffuse into our work lives as PR people. I'll be looking for information on how you learn about new technologies and the interaction that you have with innovators who might share new technologies with you. The terms I'll be using in this study are very simple. I'll be talking about the term "Innovation." For this study, we will use the term innovation in the broadest sense of the word. An innovation is any new technology or tool that helps you to do your job. When we talk about "Innovators," we'll be talking about your experiences interacting with those people who adopt technologies first. I'm sure you know some people who know just about everything dealing with the latest innovations, and they are very close to the pulse of what

is going on with what products are new in the marketplace. These people are so close to the innovations that they sometimes invent their own versions of new technologies. You might interact directly with these individuals who stay on the cutting edge of technology, or you might only interact with these people through mutual acquaintances. This chart is called the Diffusion of innovations bell curve. We'll be referring to it later in the interview. This is a breakdown of people in a population. It shows where the innovators and opinion leaders lie. Later on in the interview I'd like for you to place yourself somewhere on the chart as well as the PR population in general. The initial questions are fairly general. These are about innovators and innovations. So my first question is Which technologies are you using in your job, and why? bit about my research and then I'll ask you some questions about your career.

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this interview. I'd like to tell you a little

Greg

Well first I'd like to say that I'm going to be a laggard for most things, and there's a good reason that PR people lag behind. I in the PR business it's more effective to reach larger groups. You're trying to reach the masses. If you're out here (pointing to the early adopter category) the masses don't have the technology. So what I'm really doing is I'm waiting for mass adoption. And some technologies will fall off and some will catch on. I'm just waiting for the masses to catch on. For example, where we're at with podcasting. Is that going to be a big deal? Is it going to be influential? Is it something that we need to do? We just don't know yet. Who knows? We don't know yet because we haven't gotten to this (pointing to the majority section of the chart) center part of the podcasting curve. We're still down here in the innovator area, or maybe some early adoption going on. I tend to gravitate to using the technologies that my audiences are using.

Researcher

So let's say podcasting doesn't catch on for five years among the majority. You're thinking that that's the time when it's going to be time to speak to them in a language that they are understanding five years from now?

Greg

With the budget I have, I have to do that. I understand the argument of fragmentation, that you find your audience wherever they are, and that a completely savvy communications and public relations professional will know right now the percentage of their audience using various technologies. I don't have the money to find that out.

Researcher

Right

Greg

Um there's some general data out there, but it doesn't necessarily fit with what I want to do, so I'd have to spend a lot of time and money discovering which new technologies are where right now. Though I may be missing early communication, and this early segmentation, that's a known entity for me. I'll pick them up when the technology becomes more widespread.

Researcher

Ok, great. This is really interesting to me that you have these strong opinions because some people haven't ever really thought about it. They haven't thought about where they are with technology or where they would want to be.

Greg

Well I've seen the early adopter chart. And right in here (pointing to the late majority area) is where you want to be.

Researcher

Alright. I was wondering which technologies you are currently using in your job.

Greg

Printed newsletters.

Researcher

Really?

Greg

Yes. They're tried and true. They're easy to produce and distribute as a one-way communication tool. The problem is, it's only one way. We use email, which is now getting to be old and cumbersome because email boxes are so full. But what the market is telling us is that people are at least willing to glance at the email subject line before they delete it. A lot of us have set up our computers to recognize junk emails and block them, but for the ones that get

through, we'll read the subject to decide whether or not to act on them. We have learned that a good subject line will get somebody to open the document, and if the document is extremely short and to the point, it may be effective, so the idea of presenting an intriguing subject line, with a very short bullet point document with each one leading to a larger story later on, kind of like the Business Report. It's like their Daily Report email, a perfect example. Although still not everybody can read html on their computer, so even then we've got a lot to learn because some people are reading this thing and they're not seeing the graphics they're not seeing the colors. And they delete it. So we're using email newsletters, or really what we call email headlines. They're short and to the point, and the technology is tried and true. We use a Website that is interactive. I'm not sure that we're using the Website to its fullest capability because I'm not sure about your average citizen's use of the Internet. The data may be there, but I'm not sure. Most of the data that I have seen shows that people will stay at a Website until one of two things happen. They're confused or they realize that it's not doing a thing for them. They get lost and you'll probably never get them to come back. So that means a simple Website that offers a value is successful, so we're trying to get there. A simple site that offers value. So yeah, the Web is a tried and true technology. One technology we're about to roll out is a CD. It's cutting edge for us because we've never used it before. I wasn't sure of the value, but this will tell us. An interactive CD. Hardware like that is almost replaced by the Internet, meaning everything that's on a CD can be on a Website, so I'd never have to make a CD and mail it to anybody. But not everybody is connected all the time. So a CD is portable enough to let people watch it on a plane, or if they're not on the Internet. And some of the parts have links so that if they are connected they can click on the links and go. So that's a technology we're getting into- a mass produced CD. The others are very basic. Tours and speeches and news releases. Now the news release technology has changed. We don't mail them out anymore. It's all electronic. And again I think

understanding the technology is important because there are many ways to issue an electronic news release. You can issue a full color html document as an attachment, you can put everything in the body of an email, or you can do a headline type thing, where you get a link and link it back to a story. And I'm not sure that I know yet what is the most effective use of that technology, but it appears to be again, the simpler the better. An email with all the information in the body of the email, and a link within the email to more information. And an email that can be read by people who don't have an html reader. So what we've learned is we used to design our news releases in a word document with our logo and the fancy font and everything. We'd just drag it into an email and send it out. Subsequently the document would become gibberish, because as soon as you drag and drop in an email, it's now in html format and you have to be able to read html. So to try to reverse that, we try to compose our news releases within the email itself. And then for archival purposes we'll drag it into a Word document and keep it and post it. So we're still trying to sort out that. And I want somebody to tell me the answer to that question. I'm dying for somebody to tell me the best way to deliver electronic news releases. Maybe somebody has done a survey of reporters to find out exactly how they most prefer to get news releases. You know, can your computer read html? Do you need it text only? If it has an attachment is it automatically blocked? Or is just the attachment blocked? The data may be there, but I haven't seen it.

Researcher

So what are you not using?

Greg

We're not using podcasting. We're not using satellite uplinks. We're not using media satellite tours. We're not using ... um...

Researcher

Are these things that you're not using that you'd like to? Or are these decisions that you made based on what you want to do?

Greg

They're decisions because they're a little expensive and they're complicated and they require specialized expertise. I'm not sure of the value. Um... There are other technologies that are emerging, and I wish I were up on all of them, but I'm not. But here are some things you know that are likely. Blackberries are growing in use. So you'd like to think that maybe we should format things for a Blackberry. I don't know what that means. I assume that because a Blackberry is small and has a small screen, there are probably some format issues, so if I were to send somebody a document and I want them to read and respond with their Blackberry, it would probably have to have certain characteristics. I'm not going there yet, ok? Because Blackberries right now are only in the hands of professionals who have a budget to buy one. And I don't know where we are with that. We're probably in the early adoption stage of Blackberries. We're passed the innovation stage and we're probably in the early adoption stage. Maybe a little bit beyond the early adoption with Blackberries. But if you go on the street, I'm going to guess that, if you stop 100 people and asked them if they knew what a Blackberry is, I would guess that maybe 10 or 15 people who could tell me what it is. And that's just guessing, I may be way off on that. And that's the point that I'm getting at. The people that are using it are highly educated

and highly informed. It may be good for some of our uses, you know, our board members are likely to function with Blackberries, so therefore, for reaching just our board members, it may be something to pursue, but we also know that they get email, and they also get our printed newsletter. So how much effort do I have to put into the Blackberry? So for things like Blackberries, podcasting we have not used. Theoretically, I guess, we could put out a little wireless signal around our campus, so that our neighbors could log in to us wirelessly, and therefore provide Internet service for people who aren't wired. That may happen one day. A corporation may decide, you know, we're big, and we're huge, and our neighbors don't know much about us, and we know they can't afford Internet. Why don't we just put out a wireless network in our area, so that anybody living within a half mile of us can get free wireless Internet. Our campus has Internet access, and then we're going to tell them that they have it now, and we're going to tell them that we gave it to them, so then we can set up a home page with our stuff on it. You know? I wouldn't be surprised if that doesn't happen sometime soon. I don't know where the FCC is going to be in regulating hotspots, but if an entire city can be wired like Baton Rouge or New Orleans, presumably White Castle can be wired, and Dow Chemical can do the wiring, or the unwiring. So we're not into direct delivery of wireless Internet to people. We don't have a broadcast signal, you know where it broadcasts things. We don't have the channel through the cable company to provide a show.

Researcher

So you've decided that these are the technologies that you want to use, and these are the technologies that you don't. It's not that something is keeping you from getting your ideas approved, or bureaucracy that's holding you back?

Greg

No, I'm totally restrained by budget. I couldn't do any of those things if I wanted to. But even if I could, I'm not sure that I would want to. But theoretically, to reach our audience, it could behoove us to have a satellite linked conference or an interactive, Web based conference. But I don't know if that's any better than having a conference here and inviting people to fly in, because we do that successfully. But although it's possible, I don't know how valuable it is. It's something I could explore, and if it does end up being efficient, that would be something paid for by someone else's budget. It would be paid for by our education budget. But it's possible that that could happen. We've been inviting scientists to come to (unnamed low-tech organization) twice a year now, and they're very successful. But whether we'd have an international Web based symposium where people can present wherever they are in the world. We don't do that, but that was one thing that might be useful for conducting science conferences.

Researcher

Well, one thing that I wanted to talk to you about too was, I'm trying to study the effects of proximity to innovators. So if you're telling me that you're in the laggard category, I'm wondering how close you are, sort of like in degrees of separation, to innovators. You've said that you work with scientists all the time, but do you feel that you know and interact with people who are in the innovator category?

Greg

We're mainly in the biological sciences. And scientists tend to, I think, to be early adopters because that's where they are, that's where their brain is. So I'm around early adopters. I wouldn't know as much about Blackberries if I wasn't working here because people have them.

And people have cool laptops with touch screens so I get to see the early adoption, but early adoption doesn't mean that it's an effective communication tool. It means it's a neat gadget and somebody wants it. I tend to think I may be a laggard. I have thought I'm a laggard because I'm not near the electronic innovation. Most of the technology is electronically based and digitally based. I'm not near anyone who thinks about those things or invents those things or has shown me those things. So I have to go to conferences to see it.

Researcher

So the science innovation that you're around is not about technology, it's more medical science and more traditional.

Greg

Yeah, we try to be innovative in our communication department, but that's not technologically innovative, it's innovative in ways of thinking about getting our message out. And I tend to think that if it doesn't require innovation as much as it requires certain understanding of the basics of communication and applying the basic rules. Today in this highly creative, entertainment and technology driven world, I firmly believe that the successful communicator is one that understands and applies the basics. And I learned that lesson by reading about advertising. David Oglesby, an advertiser who wrote some textbooks did a study on all the advertisers who won a Cleo on a certain year. That's the creative award in advertising. Boy, if you've got a Cleo, you've got a career type thing. So he took all of the winners of the Cleo one year, and he went back to find out how many of those agencies were still in business. Most of them were not, so the conclusion he drew is that, though they were highly creative and won creative awards, they obviously weren't serving their clients very well by increasing sales. And

that's what advertising is supposed to do. They had creative, funny, entertaining, non-effective ads. So the people who stick with the basics are serving their clients better, but they may not be winning any awards. So sticking to the basics in this day and age may be innovative.

Researcher

When you work with people that have innovative qualities, like the early adopters that you work with here, do they ever try to show you things that you might adopt?

Greg

Sure

Researcher

And how does that work?

Greg

Well, I see something neat and say, "What is that? Tell me what it does? How did you do it?" and most of the time you get adjectives like "Watch this, this is cool, this is neat, look at what this does," and it's like a litany of features, but I always come away with sort of this mixed reaction. It's intimidation mixed with "So what?" Intimidation meaning, boy they knew about this before me. They know something I don't know. Do they know how to use something that I don't know how to use? Are they more effective because of it? So I'm a little intimidated. And then I walk away thinking well, they didn't tell me if it was effective, they didn't tell me if it had a benefit. They told me the features, but I still think, so what? You know. And that's the "so what" phase. And this happens a lot. You know the first time I saw a Blackberry I walked away

thinking oh my gosh, I am behind the times. Well that was six years ago, looking back six years, Blackberries were ineffective back then in any mass communication. In fact, I'm still not sure a Blackberry is going to help me do my job, either owning one personally, or delivering something specifically for people who have Blackberries.

Researcher

Do you think that you'd be more likely to accept the technology if it came from another PR person instead of someone who was such an early adopter type?

Greg

Well of course, because they could tell me how it's useful in their business and therefore it could be useful in my business. In fact, I was introduced to the Internet by a fellow public relations person. The very first person I knew who knew what the Internet was, and I'm not sure it was even called the Internet then, I can't remember. It was back in 1988 or so. A friend of mine in the PR business with an agency said, "Well I have this neat thing called Prodigy on my computer at home." I think it was Prodigy. So I said, "What's that?" And he says, "Well you turn your computer on and it hooks through a telephone line and you get this almost like a magazine screen," and I can't remember how he described it, but he said, "Yeah you can get sports and I can read about entertainment, and I can get the news," and I couldn't understand what he meant. I didn't know what the screen looked like or anything, but here's a guy who opened my eyes. And when he said, "You can get news and information," suddenly he's telling me a benefit.

Researcher

Right. Because he's a PR person like you.

Greg

Right. And so I started to think, OK, I wonder what this is? And I think in terms of the Internet, compared to the general public, I was probably further up this curve (pointing to the early majority category.) I don't know where I would be. I'm not sure I was an early adopter, but maybe just behind that. I remember when I finally got the Internet, I felt like I was a little behind, but I remember that all the literature was still explaining why the Internet was important and useful. It was about why should a corporation have a Website, why should a corporation have the Internet. You know, what is in it for them. And every corporation was still grabbing their space on the Internet. They weren't really even sure what they would do with it. They were just carving out their space. There were people in corporations who were early adopters saying "I don't know where this is going to go, but I'm going to grab our name," you know, grab Dow.com or Chrysler.com or whatever. So that's when I got the Internet. So I know I must've been somewhere in the early stage. It was probably in the early 90's and I had my business up and running. I think it was AOL. I think it was AOL that I signed up for. So it was whenever AOL came out. I don't know how early they were.

Researcher

That's very interesting that someone who was close to your field could show you the benefit that way. What are some of the benefits with the technology that you do use, what are the benefits that you're looking for? Do you use technology for research, or management, or boosting creativity, or...

Greg

Research is excellent. You know, the Internet certainly has completely changed how I do research. It still kind of in a way is limiting, because there's so much undocumented information and un-vetted information, so you have to work harder on the Internet to know if what you're reading is legitimate. You don't have the benefit of having a librarian who knows about the subject matter so that you know that it's published by a reputable publisher, that it's gone through something with the editing and publishing channels. Although libraries have things that can be questionable too, at least you have the benefit of an editor and a publisher and a librarian to help you select the good stuff. So research is big. Do you mean professionally, or personally?

Researcher

Well, I mean professionally, but some people have offered examples of technologies that they adopt first for personal use, and then once they figure out how to use them, they come up with interesting ways to use the technology for work. So that would be useful to me.

Greg

No, it doesn't work that way for me. Any technology that I pick up I usually hear about it and use it at work first. My personal life is much slower on adoption than my professional life. This is mainly (laughing) because I'm even stingier for what I buy at home. If I'll buy a computer at home it's going to be there for a while. My wife said this the other day. She said that we're five to seven years behind in everything. We didn't get a computer game until the Xbox was introduced. So we skipped right by Atari, pong, Nintendo, Playstation, Playstation II, Nentendo 64 or whatever, it wasn't until the Xbox came out that we got a computer game. And we didn't buy an iPod until this Christmas. The iPod has been out for five years, and we didn't get one

until this Christmas, so it's never getting to our house before it gets to somebody else. And our kids just can't stand that. But professionally, in terms of technology that helps me professionally, email is a huge help but it's also highly problematic. And I'm waiting for somebody to help me with that. Who out there is going to create a means that makes email more effective? Meaning there's nothing in the box that I don't want, or it's really easy to peg before I get there, and we get away from email as far as the perception that email is sufficient. The idea that "I've sent them an email, therefore it will be done, I will get a response, it will be fine."

What a big, big mistake that is. I've tried to tell people myself that email is ineffective for me. You know, don't send an email to me expecting anything to happen. If you want it to happen please call, please back up the email or do anything you want, but don't just press the send button and forget it hoping that what you want to happen will happen. When are we going to get that mindset because that's the way that it is right now. And unfortunately there are some technophiles who sit at their computers all day, and email is great for them. And they believe the entire world functions the way that they do. There isn't an email that is in their box for five minutes before it's opened and acted upon. Because that's just what they do. They function with email all day. I'll have somebody send me an email in the morning at 800. I'll bump into them at 1000 a.m. and they say, "Hey, did you get my email?" Well, that's two hours, chances are I was working on something in the office, I was out in a meeting, I got interrupted by a reporter, and my boss called me. I haven't even opened my email yet, and they want to know two hours later if I got it and did I act upon it yet. But at least that was a follow up, so maybe that is their way of doing what I want them to do, and follow up to make sure I got the email.

Researcher

So when you look at the benefits of technology, like research, do you think that technology isn't really giving you much of a communication benefit?

Greg

No, no no. I'm saying that it does give a communication benefit for me, but as long as it's done the right way. You know, an email isn't any different than a letter, it's just delivered quicker. You're forced to open it, you're forced to read it. The only trouble with email is that it tends to force you to give a quicker response than a letter does, or a note or a memo. It kind of has an urgency about it. But that technology has helped because I'm not going to lose it. It's not going to get thrown in the trash by accident by someone else. It's not going to get buried on the desk it's not going to get misplaced, hopefully. It's always right there on the box unless your computer crashes. So, no I don't want to leave you with the impression that technology doesn't help me. It's helped me a great deal. The Web, the Internet for research. We use the Internet for distributing information, and people tell me it works quite well. We got a request the other day to put a map on the Internet so people know how to find us. Well there is a map there, all we had to do was tell them that it was there already. Our news releases are working electronically, sort of. We're posting photographs so people can go get photographs and print them. So, no, technology is working. Isn't that what you asked?

Researcher

Yeah, I asked for the benefits.

Greg

Ok.

Researcher

What about roles and power? Do you think that technology can help practitioners with their careers?

Greg

I don't know. I think that technology per se won't, because technology is just a tool. Everybody has the same tools available to them, but some people move up and some people don't. So like anything else, can you use those tools to provide value to your organization? And the people that rise to the top, for the most part, are people which the organization recognizes provide value. It's not always that way, there's always office politics, there's always other things, but if you're valuable enough to keep and promote, that's what happens. Now you may have gotten that value because you've mastered technology and allowed it and used it to do something valuable. A great example might have been that presidential candidate who used the Internet to rally support, Dean. I would argue that the person on his staff who said, "We can use this technology to increase campaign contributions," turned around, really increased campaign contributions really well, really was effective at that. They were getting donations on the Internet. I would argue that that person moved up or stood to move up in the Dean campaign as well as, if he'd have been elected he'd have moved up. He provided tremendous value by harnessing technology, and that's the way it is. Whether you're harnessing the power of the pen or harnessing the power of the Blackberry. Now the subtlety is that technology can help you to do something that reaches more people easier than otherwise. A great deal of value within any organization comes if you

can prompt action within a lot of people. You know, I can prompt a lot of people to buy this product. If I can prompt more people to buy this product than Joe, I'm going to get promoted. Well, I can hit a lot more people a lot more frequently and a lot easier with email than with a letter, so if I can learn how to harness the power of email, and learn how to make it work for me, and maybe create a little viral marketing, which we don't use here, suddenly, maybe I'm generating a whole bunch of sales that I couldn't do with a printing press and an envelope and a stamp. So in that instance, it's always harnessing the technology to promote value, and technology can let you reach more people cheaper. And that's really what it comes down to. It doesn't mean that you're more effective, you can just reach more people cheaper. You still have to figure out how to make that work for you.

Researcher

As far as gender goes, our field is very female dominated. Do you think that gender plays a role in someone's tendency to adopt technology?

Greg

I have no earthly idea. You know, guys are always portrayed to be gadget freaks but I guess that's a stereotype. That's beyond my knowledge. I have no idea if gender affects technology adoption.

Researcher

Ok. What about age?

Greg

I think younger people are always the innovators. It's just because while you're young and growing up, everything is new, and you don't necessarily have tried and true things to compare it to. It's just all new, so let's try it out. But I think with that said, it doesn't mean that your basic 90 year old can't figure out how to use technology. There are 90 year olds right now teaching people how to use the Internet. I know that for a fact. I've been involved with it and I've seen it.

Researcher

Really? Here?

Greg

Well in California a big study was done, and I met the guy who did the study and I've seen the videotapes of it. I had a little experience in my previous job because we were dealing with the elderly. But there's a guy in California who really wanted to know about adoption of technology by senior citizens. And he found that a senior citizen, oddly enough, could learn how to use the Internet pretty quick. As long as it was taught in a way that they were familiar with. Some minor changes were made to account for things like nearsightedness, arthritis, a little bit lack of mobility and comfort. For example, a wireless keyboard goes a long way to letting senior citizens work on the Internet because they can sit in a comfortable chair or wherever they want to with a wireless keyboard and bigger screens go a long way.

Researcher

Ok. Great. So in the beginning, you put yourself here (pointing to the laggard category) do you still think that you are in that category?

Greg

Yeah. I can't think of a single technology that we're grabbing early. Like I said, I'm constrained by budget, but as far as technology goes, I need to be sure of its effectiveness before I go into something new. That's why I'm not using viral marketing. I don't know if it would be effective in my field of work. If I was selling t-shirts I'd be doing that right now. You know that seems to be the only way that t-shirts take off right now. You send an email pointing to a spot on the Web, you send it to a friend, they send it to friends and before you know it they all go to the site and pretty soon you're selling "Willy Nagan and the Chocolate Factory" t-shirts. I mean that t-shirt would be nowhere right now. It would be only local, but that thing has gone all over the country. It's viral marketing. That's where it's at with kids and unusual things. But does it help me to let people understand about our center? I don't think so. So we're not into trying to start a viral marketing campaign right now.

Researcher

Where do you think the PR profession in general falls on the adoption chart?

Greg

Well, I'm going to try to answer that question based on what I've seen when I've gone to learning moments. You know, I've gone to conferences to hear people talk about this and that, I've seen these seminars and symposium. I would say, in general the PR profession is a late adopter of technology. I haven't attended a conference yet where somebody has taught me something that hasn't been around in the marketplace for a good deal of time. You know, technophiles are already using it and it's already out there. We tend to learn from the innovators. I don't think PR people are necessarily innovators in technology. We're not in the technology

development business. We're in the communication business. So unless somebody tells us about a new medium, or shows us a new medium, show us how it works. We have to see it in practice, and then we might adopt. So I think we're late adopters.

Researcher

Well, that was my last question. Thank you so much for your time and information. You have given me some great examples that I haven't thought of before. Is there anything you'd like to add or clear up before we close?

Greg

No. I think we've covered everything.

## **Ivan McGregor Interview**

Researcher

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this interview. I'd like to tell you a little bit about my research and then I'll ask you some questions about your career.

The information I learn from you today will help me to gain a better understanding of how my research topic relates to practitioners in the field. Your answers will help me to complete my thesis research in public relations and technology. The focus of the research is to learn about what influences practitioners to use new technologies, and how these technologies affect their careers. Research has shown that practitioners have used technology to move up in their careers, and I want to dig a little deeper on that topic to find out how innovation can help our profession. I'm looking forward to hearing your input on this topic, so thank you again for agreeing to help me. Your feedback will give me valuable information for my research. One of the things I am trying to get to is whether the time you spend with innovators affects your career. Whether you think that the time spent with the innovators is making you more like them...

Ivan

The answer is yes. (laughing)

Researcher

Good. I want to get into that during the interview. First let's get some things covered.

Your participation here is totally confidential and voluntary, so if you need to drop out for any reason during the interview, that is fine. In this discussion we will talk about how new innovations diffuse into our work lives as PR people. I'll be looking for information on how you

learn about new technologies and the interaction that you have with innovators who might share new technologies with you. The terms I'll be using in this study are very simple. I'll be talking about the term "Innovation." For this study, we will use the term innovation in the broadest sense of the word. An innovation is any new technology or tool that helps you to do your job. When we talk about "Innovators," we'll be talking about your experiences interacting with those people who adopt technologies first. I'm sure you know some people who know just about everything dealing with the latest innovations, and they are very close to the pulse of what is going on with what products are new in the marketplace. These people are so close to the innovations that they sometimes invent their own versions of new technologies. You might interact directly with these individuals who stay on the cutting edge of technology, or you might only interact with these people through mutual acquaintances. This chart is called the Diffusion of innovations bell curve. We'll be referring to it later in the interview. This is a breakdown of people in a population. It shows where the innovators and opinion leaders lie. Later on in the interview I'd like for you to place yourself somewhere on the chart as well as the PR population in general. The initial questions are fairly general. These are about innovators and innovations. So my first question is Which technologies are you using in your job, and why?

Ivan

I of course use an Apple G5 workstation and In Design, Photoshop, Illustrator, those types of technologies. As well as email, a digital camera. I use a Trio 650 to keep track of my schedule and all that kind of stuff.

Researcher

And that's like a PDA or a Blackberry?

Ivan

Well it was the first phone that kind of brought everything together. So it's a cell phone, Blackberry and all that in one. It's pretty cool. It's really cool. And I was the first person to have one of those at work.

Researcher

Yeah. Ok.

Ivan

Let's see... what other kinds of technologies... well of course I have a large digital display so I can look at graphic designs and stuff. One of the things that is kind of lacking for me now, because I'm dealing with these extremely large files, with signage, it's like 600 megabytes and stuff, is network capacity. So you know, I do a lot of work with Ohio State University and one of the problems is that they have like a 1 megabyte file limit, (laughing) so when you send them stuff, you can't send attachments. You know, I'm always trying to figure out the best way to do that, and you know, one of the things I figured out was just having storage space. And being able to upload these files to a location where a person can download them from a link. Because what I've found is that when I'm dealing with people who are down here (pointing to the laggards section of the bell curve) like older people, and older printers and stuff like that, you just have to make it so easy for them that they can't mess it up, right? So that means not sending them big files that they don't understand. And actually when PDF kind of came on the scene and was starting to be widely adopted, that made my life a whole lot easier, because before it was, "send me a jpeg" or send me a ... and it's like those are not the best files that I know will give us

the best output, and I'd have to explain that to them. So you know, file type... and Adobe, now that they've done this and Macromedia those two companies coming together. It's ... people are concerned about competition, but those technologies are going to make for a very interesting work place for me, so I'm looking forward to seeing what happens with the new Macromedia Suite and the new Adobe Suite and how they integrate. And that really has made my life a whole lot easier, just over the last couple of years. With even just In Design, and how well it integrates with Photoshop and Illustrator and I think like Go Live, their application is probably going to disappear, because it's not as good as Dreamweaver. Part of my job is also to just design things and let other people make them interactive, like interactive touch panel devices and things, so for that stuff I use Photoshop and I send raw files to someone who then uses Macromedia Director to make all that stuff interactive. What else....?

Researcher

Do you ever use wikkis or blogs?

Ivan

Actually I don't. I don't. That's one area where I'm lagging behind. I have a friend who is really into music and he also has these opinions about things that he wants to post everywhere. So he's created his own blogs and he keeps telling me that I've got to learn how to do podcasting and things along those lines and the funny thing is that he's now going to school to be a graphic designer so he has all this time to do this stuff. And what's happening is that because I have a full time job and I've got all these things, and with learning these applications, Adobe's cycle is almost too much because it almost seems like the software is changing every 8 months, and keeping up with that is rough. It takes using it and reading. You have to rely on old technology

sometimes and go out and buy books even as much as I don't like to do the printed stuff. But those are pretty much the technologies that I'm using. I'm a commissioner in my area, so I deal with a lot of people. I'm probably the youngest person on the commission, and I've created a Website so that I could keep people informed I'm the chair of the public relations committee. And I said "we need to create a Website" and people were like, "oh my God, no." A lot of people don't like the idea...

Researcher

Are they afraid of it?

Ivan

Yeah, they're afraid of the technology, but in this case they're afraid of citizen feedback. Because once you open up the gates to us receiving emails about crime or anything that happens in our area, all of a sudden it's like, there's accountability there, so when I did that it was very interesting. We started getting emails from people about issues that were of importance to them and next thing you know, it was so funny. They said, "Ivan, can you make it so that just the president gets the email?" And here we are, all elected officials, we should probably want to have consensus. And some people were very adamant about it, they said, "Only the president should get the emails, and we'll let him tell us what the important issues are." And I fought it tooth and nail. But it was a technology issue. Once we started getting good feedback from some of the citizens, it changed. And what I do intend to do with the Website is just to create a message board, because we have sunshine laws in Ohio, you have to open up that communication for public information. You have to open that up so they can view the stuff, so that's how I intend to do that. It's currently in an email system. What I've had to do is just

create on the server a duplicate email that goes to an area that's always like, every email that comes in, and every response gets put into this folder so that later on if there's ever a question or a law suit or something like that I can open the folder and show where all these things go. So the Web server technology is also something that I've had to get used to.

Researcher

Let's look at technologies that aren't being used. Are there technologies that you're not using that you'd like to be using, and are there technologies that you are using that most people are not using?

Ivan

One of the things that I wanted to do for the convention was to do a podcast because we gave away iPods this year. So we thought it would be really cool to just put some kind of mp3 file on there that explained what (unnamed high-tech organization) does. Apple is making it really easy with this thing called Garage Band which I haven't used. So it's one of these things where I've got three days to try to figure out how to do this. I could've probably figured out the application, but the timing was kind of weird, so I guess that would be one. Video is something that we do at (unnamed high-tech organization) that I don't personally do. I kind of help to direct the videos and work with people and stuff. But that's actually become a really important tool that we've been using because you can show a congress person testimonial and stuff. That really plays well for them. That's something that we are kind of doing there. What I'd like to see that I think is going to happen in the future is interactive, like serious gaming environments, where you'll be able to take a person who maybe passes legislation for funding and things like that and put them in immersive environments where it's not just like watching a video, but they get to be in a 3

dimensional space and work within it and look at data. And our biggest thing as PR people in this field is dumbing the stuff down for these guys, so it's just like the scientists who just want to visualize their data as opposed to knowing how it all comes together. We have to do that to another level and bring what's important about their research and what's important about our systems and all that stuff and I think that this three dimensional space stuff like virtual world kind of stuff is going to be the next tool.

Researcher

So you think that's still in the process of being adopted by people?

Ivan

Yeah, it's starting to happen. It's a lot of data that you create when you do this stuff, so again, that's why we have to have these really important networks in place because the cool thing to me is that this type of thing needs to start showing up in K through 12 because I don't know how many times you've been asked, "what is a supercomputer?", but I would surely like to see more kids knowing what supercomputers are at the age of 10 in America, than not knowing. I think that once we create environments that are kind of sticky and kids can play in them and learn about NASA and science and high performance computing, then half of our job is done. Because they are going to be the kids that later become the professionals that drive high performance computing. So I think that's going to be pretty cool.

Researcher

Cool. Alright, what do you think influences which technologies you adopt? Is it cost, or benefit, or what?

Ivan

So, I read about technology. And a lot of times I read Wired. And Wired is a great magazine to kind of see what's coming out. And then I'll go online I'll go online and I'll search for the price. If it's way out there I'll wait because I know how this works. Give them a little while and the price will drop. But at work they have the funds to keep me using the latest and greatest stuff.

Researcher

So they're buying your equipment?

Ivan

Yeah, they're buying my equipment. So generally, they come by once a year and ask if I need anything, and I'll say yes or no. And it's good for them because when I'm working on these big files it takes a while to render. When I first started like six years ago I could walk away and come back six hours later and it would still be saving the file, or something ridiculous like that. Now it's like thirty minutes or ten minutes. So it works out for them because not only am I happier, but I can spend more time working. I'm lucky with them being that way. And for my home office I wait patiently until it's affordable.

Researcher

How would you define innovator?

Ivan

Well, to me, when I think of innovator, I think of the people who are actually developing the things that we use. I think about Apple and the people who make the stuff easy enough for everybody to use. So I'd say that Steve Jobs is probably an innovator.

Researcher

Are there any people that you interact with that you would consider innovators?

Ivan

Oh yeah, obviously I do. There's a guy named Pete Whitecoft who I work with who I guess two or three years ago he worked with a guy named Panda on this thing called Infiniband. Mellinix was the vendor that helped us develop this stuff and we were the only booth that had it. Pete Whitecoft and Panda developed the application to make it work, and now you can't even walk the (Supercomputing exhibitor) floor without seeing Infiniband everywhere. So that makes me pretty happy when I see that. The new generation of system engineers and coders are the innovators now. The older generation are not quite there. I was hanging out with my friend Paul who has been with the center since it started and he's like I don't have a cell phone, I won't use one of those. And I'm like, Paul, how can you live without a cell phone. Here's a guy who installed the first Cray at (unnamed high-tech organization) years ago. There are some people who don't care about it. Now he cares of course about the installation of the new mass storage system, which is innovation stuff. But he doesn't want to have anything to do with this new fandanglement technology. That's what he calls it. And he's a great guy, and he rides his bike to work every day and here he is also, a person who knows, very deeply, how important high performance computing is. It's funny. He's a strange character.

Researcher

Would you consider that guy, Paul, an innovator, though?

Ivan

Yes, he is. In high performance computing, that's what he does. He's also the guy who says, "if we can take this and make it work it's going to be super cool. And if it doesn't work, he knows that it's just a risk that he had to take. And that's a lot of this game. It's looking at new technologies and trying to assess whether or not they're going to work. That's what he does on a regular basis. It's just a strange irony that he doesn't care about, I think he calls it "entertainment technology."

Researcher

Entertainment technology. That's funny. So, are there anymore instances of interactions that you've had with people who could convince you to try a technology? Interactions with people like Pete, or Paul, or people who you think of as innovators where you would go to them, and they would show you something innovative that you could use for your job?

Ivan

Yeah, so they're all Linux guys, mostly where I work. And I've been using, I think I started with Mac Plus. It was an early Mac. It was my first computer. So I've always kind of been an Apple guy, and what happened, when Apple's operating system changed to kind of being based on this free BSD, um which I think is kind of a Unix, like a Linux.

Researcher

Like a Unix based thing.

Ivan

Yeah. When that happened, it's like our two worlds kind of collided you know. And I looked at them, and I was like, "I want to learn Lenux." One, because I can take that to the home office and run all of these applications like Word or whatever, without paying crazy licensing fees to Microsoft. And they actually have a program called Gimp, which is similar to Photoshop, right? So they're like saying why don't you use Fidoro Quirk through two, or whatever, this open source version of Red Hat's Lennux, and um, well, it's all open source, but it's free, and it's very nice because it has a graphic user interface. Which (laughing) a lot of these guys...

Researcher

Uh hmm. They hate the GUI.

Ivan

Yeah, they don't like a GUI. But I love it. And also, years ago I wanted to create a network switch basically, and I didn't know how to do it. Basically, I just knew that I needed to set up three computers at my home, and so I went to one of these guys who basically knows just about everything about networking and other things. He's a great guy, his name's Troy Bear. So I go to him and I say, yeah, I want to set up this network switch thing. And he goes, "you should build a Lenux box and this is how you do it." So that was my first experience with Lenux, and it had a really wacky graphic user interface. It wasn't very good. It's not like it is now, so it took me like three days of staying up until 400 in the morning typing in code, and I was like, oh my

God, this is ridiculous! Why am I having to type in these crazy commands? But I did it and it worked and I just left that switch running for like a year and it never crashed. It just worked. What I didn't realize was that somebody had taken over the box and was using it to run another computer in another country somewhere. Because I got this email from RoadRunner support, and they're saying, "Dear Mr..." um actually, it was in my girlfriend's name! So it said, "Dear Krissy Anders, Your computer is being used for what has been termed hacking." So it was really funny and I still have that letter.

Researcher

She was probably real happy with you at that point. (laughing)

Ivan

She didn't care. Actually, it was funny, because she came to me and she was like, "Ivan, are you hacking?" Because she got the letter, and I was like, "What?" And then I turned on the box, and there was all this stuff that's been going on. I didn't have a monitor attached to it. So I looked at it and I was like, oh man. So I went back to Troy and I was like, "You're not going to believe this letter I got." So there's a danger in not knowing these technologies and getting into them. It worked perfectly for me, you know. It did exactly what I needed to do. All my stuff was probably not secure, but it worked. But yeah. It's cool having these guys to go and talk to because they really do know what's coming next. And some of them are better than others at explaining better how it works and how it's going to happen. And those are the people I tend to gravitate towards.

Researcher

Do you think you would be more likely to take the technology recommendations of someone who was closer to your field, like a PR person?

Ivan

I think that if somebody has a tool that's useful to my job, I don't really care where it comes from. But the one thing that I think we're lacking at (unnamed high-tech organization) is a person who is really an expert in public relations, specifically. You see, Katie is basically a government liaison. So she's almost like a lobbyist, but she does do a lot of media stuff because we don't really have somebody who's doing a lot of that. And it needs to be fixed. But when I work with outside public relations people, I'm always interested in the things that they're doing and the things that they're using. But to me, honestly it looks like a lot of the ones who are successful are the ones who embrace technology. One of the problems that we have with a person on staff is that he likes to read the paper in the morning. It's not like he embraces technology and I think that that's a bad move, and if you're going to be a PR person for a high performance computing center, you have to care about technology. You have to know what's coming next and how to leverage that so we can get some PR out of this thing. And that's a breakdown that we have, honestly. At least in our group, because this is a person who's supposed to be doing all this writing. What he does is he goes after local news outlets. And if we could let him use a typewriter and fax these things to people, he would. Because that's what he learned, that's what he knows. So he's kind of getting caught left behind by the system. He doesn't want to embrace the necessary tools to make it in this world. The email press release is great. To write those things is one thing, to disseminate them is another. So you either pay PR

Newswire a lot of money to do those things, or you figure out contacts and he relied on PR Newswire. And that's an expensive piece of technology. I don't know if that's as effective as creating personal contacts with people via email. Nothing quite beats meeting a person face to face and talking with them, but it's hard to do when you're trying to find reporters to talk to. I went to the Wired Tech Festival, and I was trying to find media and they were very busy putting out a magazine every month. My goal is always to have (unnamed high-tech organization) highlighted in Wired in some way. Everybody's in there, like MIT. All the major research institutions are in there like once a month. And I keep thinking, man, why aren't we in Wired? And I say it at every meeting. Why aren't we in this magazine. This is the cutting edge magazine. We're doing all this cutting edge research. Why aren't we in this magazine. No one can answer me. I'm asking these questions because I know they're important. You've got to be aggressive in this game, and that's where I think part of the problem is. And you've got to be able to use the technology aggressively. I can't even send out mass emails. That's one technology that everybody's using. They're using the term "spam" for this but if the person wants the information...

Researcher

Like "opt- in?"

Ivan

Yeah. If they've opted in.

Researcher

Are there policies at (unnamed high-tech organization) that prevent you from doing that?

Ivan

No. I think that what it is, our system administrator, the network guy is kind of like, “why do you want to spam people?” Well, it just so happens that they’re on a list of 9000 people, but they want this information. He looks at it and there’s no technological problem to it at all.

Everything can be solved, but he’s the guy that says, “Do you know how much spam we get on a regular basis? Do we want to be spamming people?” So what I end up doing is going home, downloading an application on my Windows box from home, and crashing my mail server.

That’s my work around. But that’s going to change. It’s got to change. It will have to change.

The funny thing is that he’s right. He fights spam every day, but at the same time we’ve got to be able to communicate with these people that we meet.

Researcher

It sounds like even some of these people in your high-tech environment are lagging behind.

What are your thoughts on the difference between PR people in a high-tech environment like yours and PR people in the outside world?

Ivan

I do think there is a difference. When I interact at events with local public relations people they are definitely looking at me like, “Oh, Ivan, you can do all of this great stuff. I think they just don’t know that the tools are out there, and also because we’re like a new generation of PR people. I think there’s an older generation who really doesn’t understand the technology.

Researcher

Because of our age?

Ivan

Yeah. Because we were born into computers. I actually remember taking typing on a typewriter. That was a long time ago. But we're dealing with people who are twenty years our seniors. They have very valuable people skills. They've worked with people via phone and all these older technologies. So there's actually something very valuable about that that we could learn from. I work with PR people in the local city of Columbus for an event, and what I got was, although I know all of these technologies very well, she was so nice and personable. She really has a skill set that I don't have because I spend so much time behind a computer screen, and not dealing with people like that on a regular basis, so I'd say that that's a difference. Maybe we do spend entirely too much time with email and all this kind of stuff. It's funny because her emails were like letters, you know. And that was cool in a sense. With the new technology, the Trio 650, if I'm going to send you an email it's like "Hey, man, here's the address, bye." And she had these really great, nice letters that I would receive via email and I was like wow this is wild. But some of that is disappearing.

Researcher

And you think that's just because of age differences?

Ivan

I think because the technology has created it so. When you have to type in on a keypad this big, the whole generation of writers is almost gone. I still have a friend who actually writes me letters. I love 'em man. I'm like, this is cool when I get a letter. So it's kind of special, but he's a dying breed too, so it's very interesting to see how that's changing. Although they don't probably have a full understanding of technology, they probably have something else that we can learn from.

Researcher

Nice. That was a whole other question that I was going to ask you about.

Ivan

Cool.

Researcher

What about gender? I mean, do you think there's a difference between men and women adopting technology? What have you seen in your interaction?

Ivan

That's interesting. I would have to say that I couldn't make a blanket statement about that. I'm thinking back to the women I used to work with in Columbus, neither one of them were very technologically advanced. One of them was older, and one was a person our age. But then I look at Lindsey Suttle who is the director of high performance computing where I work and she is an early adopter. I would make the assumption that men probably adopt technology sooner,

only because when I look at where I work it's mostly men. And there aren't a whole lot of people ... um....

Researcher

How do you think that effects a field that's so female dominated?

Ivan

I think what it means is that regardless of what your sex is, you're going to have to learn technology. You're just going to have to do it. Are women less likely to adopt technology? I don't think so. I think once the demand is there, it doesn't really matter. I think men and women both will adopt it as it is needed. So that's my best answer I'd say.

Researcher

You talked a little about cost of things and how sometimes you would wait to have something until it was cheaper. That brings me to a question about socioeconomics. Do you think that urbanization, or income or how much people travel... Do you think that those socioeconomics would effect how people adopt technology?

Ivan

Oh yeah. Yeah. So this is going to go to my commission job. I go into low income areas and the schools are not very well equipped with technology. And then I go to very nice schools that are in better off neighborhoods and you look at this and think it's obvious that there's gong to be a gap here. I mean this is going to have a major effect on education and technology. The cell phone is really going to change things. If you look, the statistics show that African Americans

adopted the cell phone way before white Americans and they say that that is because there are a couple of things that occurred. They say that African Americans are a very communal kind of culture, you know, they like to stay in touch. And the technology that allowed for ring tones, they really gravitated toward that, and they could have their favorite song playing. And I thought that was a very interesting statistic. It was like a cultural thing. Like check out my cool ring tone. And I was just amazed by that. And that's the true statistics. And if the financial opportunity is not there, they just won't do it.

Researcher

In the last part of the interview, I'd like to talk to you about career specific stuff. How do you think technology has affected your career?

Ivan

It's made it so that I can operate more efficiently, and get more stuff done, and stay busier more. It's also made it a lot more stressful. Before, when not everybody was using email, which was like maybe three years ago or whatever, like the promotions people I deal with. They weren't using email. They'd call me on the phone and sometimes they didn't have a Website, well now you look at my email load now, and it's huge compared to what it was just two or three years ago. And so it means reading a whole lot more, working a whole lot later, trying to always be connected. There's this weird thing where, I like having a laptop with me just about everywhere I go. It's kind of like I'll sit there in bed reading my email while watching television and I sit there and I need to take a break and think about that. I just have to have it. It's weird. I don't understand it, but it's almost like an addiction. I don't want to sound like the Unabomber, but there's probably some problem. And we'll see what the social effects are on some of this stuff.

Like here, my hotel doesn't have wireless because everybody is staying there and using it and they crashed it. And I'm thinking I want a rebate or something. I felt like we should all just leave if we had other places to go. Like how can you do this?

Researcher

I am the same way and I often think "this can not be healthy."

Ivan

Yeah. I've been trying to read more books that have nothing to do with technology, and that's not going so well. So. Um one of these days I might finish one of em.

Researcher

So do you think that technology makes you a better manager, or a better practitioner?

Ivan

Yeah. There's just no way I could do my job without technology. And as a manager, I have a student employee, and the fact that I can contact her and she can respond with files quickly.

Researcher

Do you think that it helps you to be more collaborative or creative?

Ivan

Yeah, well, Google, when they came up with the image search function it was kind of like if I need a picture of a microscope, or telescope or whatever, I type it in, and I get an idea of what I

want, I see other people have taken photographs, and then I go out and try to take a shot of it. So it helps me when I'm going to talk to someone about something and I want to look like I know what I'm talking about.

Researcher

Like for research?

Ivan

Yeah. Like if I'm going to talk to researchers if I didn't have Google to search them and research what they do, Because I like to know what kind of technology I'm going to be looking at. But the other side of it is just being prepared. It allows me to be prepared and it impresses people when I can say, yeah, I've seen your work.

Researcher

You can manage issues that come up too.

Ivan

Yeah. And I'm also trying to instill this stuff called copper management project software. And I'm getting a lot of resistance from people at work.

Researcher

That's like project management software, like with milestones and deadlines?

Ivan

Yeah. You can break down tasks and it helps me manage projects and there's accountability there. Because I say here's the task, here's the deadline and some people are resistant to it because there's a trail. It's kind of like when email came on the scene and people were like, "oh, I didn't get our email." And I'm like uh... no. email goes through.

Researcher

(laughing) it works.

Ivan

Yeah. It works. And although the spam thing has let people off the hook too, 'cause they're like "it must be in my trash... oh, there it is." But this project management software I'm trying to install at (unnamed high-tech organization), they are very resistant to, and you'd think they'd be all over it. You see, information is power and what I'm trying to show is that I'd like there to be a record of what I've done while at (unnamed high-tech organization), so that when I leave somebody could just go in and see all the files. I don't know why there's so much resistance, but it makes me crazy.

Researcher

You were talking about power. Let's compare again high-tech PR to low-tech PR. Have you ever seen examples of where one has more power over the other?

Ivan

Well I've looked at other jobs both in academia at OSU and the public relations jobs seem to be in some cases \$20,000 less than what I'm making now. So I kind of look at those and say there's no way I'm going to leave for that.

Researcher

And these are general low-tech jobs?

Ivan

No. Some of them are graphic designer jobs. My job officially is "senior graphic designer" and some of the graphic designer jobs are like \$36,000 or something like that. And you look at those and you go, well, in high performance computing maybe it's that we're more valued. But I don't know if that's necessarily true. Or maybe the pay scale is just higher across the board. Maybe the pay scale is just higher. I think that's what it is. Across the board. I think there's just a lot of money in our industry.

Researcher

So you think that for your career it pays in dollars for you to stay in high-tech?

Ivan

Yeah. Yeah, definitely.

Researcher

What about in decision making power? Do you think that because you know a lot about technology you'd be able to have more authority or have a role with more power to convince people to do things?

Ivan

Yeah. The more you know about technology the better. When I go to Boband I say, "I want to use this spamming tool" or whatever. He can't tell me that I can't use it because it doesn't exist. If I know it exists there's no way he can stop me. If you have a good idea and you can find the solution, that's the thing, I'll actually just go out and find a solution and say, this is exactly the type of program we want. And what he likes to do is make the technology. He doesn't like to buy the technology, he likes to look at it and figure out what he doesn't like about it and makes it. It doesn't always work for me, because it's something that he makes that's secure, and he's controlling it.

Researcher

Instead of you offering what you think is the best option.

Ivan

Instead of me controlling it really, because there is that. And as my job as commissioner, because I've created the Website, and everything, we have to abide by Robert's rules. And he's on a million committees and all this stuff, but what it boils down to is that I have control over it. So I know that's power. They don't even want to question it, because they don't want it to disappear because the city thinks it's really great. They say, "you guys are doing a great job," so

when they start talking about slowing down something, I start talking about you know “why am I the Webmaster?” and then they go, “oh, let’s go ahead and push that through, Ivan.” That’s important to me, because if I didn’t have that, I would be just like any other commissioner and that would suck. So in the end, it does help me to push things through. To be frank, the thing about being in this high-tech industry is that marketers and PR people are considered like the fluff people. In other industries they would be considered the nice go-to people. You know, if you wanted to partner with somebody, we’re seen as the people who don’t know anything about the technology. Because we’re dealing with people who are genius computer scientists. But what we do is we make it so that people understand them. And I don’t think they really value that very much.

Researcher

Even being the Web person, or the techy person among the PR group, do you think you see yourself as far separated from the computer scientists? I mean, do you think they look at you as the fluff person?

Ivan

They look at me as less fluff because I have adopted some of their technologies. As soon as I started doing that, they started saying, “He’s pretty cool. He does know what he’s talking about.” And that’s the other thing. I have my own project that I’d like to see happen. It goes back to creating virtual gaming environments for serious gaming, for training and K through 12. What I’m trying to do is position a couple of universities around the state to, one’s already giving a virtual gaming degree. They were like one of the first in the country to do it, it’s really weird. And it’s in the weirdest place of Shawnee State, Ohio, which is just down south in the

Appalachian region which is a weird place and they have this four year gaming degree. And what I want to do is support them and build a render cluster so that they don't have to wait to render out these frames while they're teaching and doing all this stuff which is what they have to do now. And what I'd like to do is put that on a third frontier network so that everybody across the state could use this as resources because it would really help to develop that stuff and that's my idea so I'd go to the senior systems guy and I'd say - You know, he only listens to me because he knows that I care about this stuff, because he knows that I have an understanding of the technology and what it would take to make it happen. If I was just a PR person, he wouldn't care.

Researcher

That's very interesting. My last question is about the chart.

Ivan

Yes.

Researcher

Where would you put yourself on the chart, and how does that compare with where you would you put the rest of the general PR population?

Ivan

I'm kind of conflicted because at work I'm right here in the early adopter category because we have a great deal with people like Apple, so as soon as the technology is released it can be in my hands as soon as I want it. That would put me somewhere right around here (pointing to the area

between the early adopters and innovators.) In my own office, I'm probably like right here, (pointing to the late majority area) because of the cost.

Researcher

So you think most people have it in the general population, and then you get it later. Because this is the majority of people. ([pointing to the majority section.]

Ivan

Yeah, that's the majority of people. That's the sweet spot right there, (pointing to the area right after the majority) because as soon as everybody starts to get it, everybody has paid too much, the price drops because there's just an influx of all this stuff, and then that's where I buy. That's where I buy right there. (pointing to the area right after the majority.)

Researcher

Ok, cool. What about the rest of the PR world?

Ivan

Not including the people here?

Researcher

No. Not the people here. Say you went to a Public Relations Society of America meeting in Ohio. What do you think they would be like, or people that you've met maybe at the university or something.

Ivan

I would say they are probably like right here. (pointing to the late majority section) and I think they're here for a different reason. They are there because of demand. Once everybody starts to use it, they have to start using it. They have to use it.

Researcher

To communicate with the rest of the world?

Ivan

Right.

Researcher

Well, thanks so much for working with me on this. I really appreciate your time. Is there anything before we go that you think I may have misunderstood that you'd like to clear up, or some final point that you'd like to make? Something that would be important for me to know?

Ivan

No, not really. You might be interested in –you know, going where technology is headed, futurist stuff.

Researcher

New media stuff?

Ivan

Yeah. And just like futurist stuff is also very interesting to me. But Bill Joy wrote that article talking about how he was convinced- this was the guy who ran Sun for a long time- he came out and said we probably created something that we can't stop and it might be the end of us. And it's kind of a weird article to read because he's quoting the guy Henry – the Unabomber.- saying that here's a guy who could've been right. And they helped “put the dot in dot com,” you know, that was their tag line. They're trying to change that now because they're trying to get back into HPC, but to read that article is very interesting. He was also chastised by the entire community. The entire technology community was like, “he's crazy this man is a total nut.” But when you start talking about designer drugs and all these things that are going to happen, you wonder exactly what we're setting ourselves up for. I love it all, but I read that article and I was scared because here's a guy who should know and he's saying some very interesting things and you say, “gosh, well I hope he's not right.” But yeah, that's it.

Researcher

Well thanks so much.

## **Joey Hotard Interview**

Researcher

Thanks so much for agreeing to do the interview with me. First of all let me tell you a little bit about the research I'm doing. Basically I'm trying to learn what influences practitioners to use certain technologies, and how the technologies affect their careers. So research has shown that practitioners have used technology to move up in their careers, so I want to dig a little deeper on that topic to find out how innovation can help our profession. I'm looking forward to your feedback on this, and thanks for agreeing to meet with me.

Joey

Your welcome.

Researcher

Your participation is confidential and voluntary, so if you need to drop out for any reason during this interview, let me know. Do you have any questions right now?

Joey

No I don't.

Researcher

Are you comfortable with answering questions on technology and innovations? I know technology can be intimidating for some people.

Joey

I'm comfortable with that.

Researcher

I'd like to clarify some of the terms. When I say "innovation" I'm simply talking about a new technology that helps you to do your job. When I talk about "innovators" I'll be asking about your experiences interacting with people who adopt technology first. I'm sure that you know some people who know just about everything dealing with the latest innovations, and they are very close to the pulse of what is going on with new products in the market place. These people are so close to the innovation, that sometimes they invent their own versions of new technologies. You might interact directly with these innovators, who stay on the cutting edge of technology, or you might only interact with these people through mutual acquaintances. So that's what I mean when I say "innovator" – this type of person who is very close to the innovation. Also I'll be using this bell curve as a reference. This is from some research that Everett Rogers did. It's called the diffusion of innovations curve. It shows that in a given population, there is usually only a very small amount of people that are involved in the earliest phase of innovation. It's only about 2.5% of the population. Then about 13.5% are early adopters, and about 34% are early majority. The late majority are about 34%, and the laggards who just never seem to adopt until the very end is about 15%. These people are very traditional. (Pointing to the innovator category) These people are very innovative, of course, and other people fall somewhere in the middle, either with the majority or earlier. OK? So we'll reference this later on so that we can talk about it. The early questions are really general. This is just about innovators and innovations. First I want to ask you about innovations. What technologies are you using in your PR job and why?

Joey

Well, of course I use email, which I guess these days isn't really that innovative anymore since it's been around for so long. We also use databases for information, we use the Web a lot to create articles, to display articles. I use instant messenger a lot. It's been around for a while, but I think people are just starting to use it in a new and different way. I think when people first started using it, it was more to communicate with friends, but the company that I'm at right now allows us to use it in our daily work situations which really saves a lot of time. It's very easy. It's instantaneous. You can communicate with people very quickly. I guess that's about it. Of course we use the Internet as a research tool along with other more traditional types of research tools.

Researcher

Ok. What technologies are you using that others may not be using?

Joey

Well, working at the (unnamed high-tech organization), we're surrounded by I think what you would term as innovators who are using technology that is definitely new to me. Things like L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X and CVS. Which from my limited understanding of them, they do a lot of the things that common software packages do right now, like allowing multiple parties to edit a document or revise a document. It's instantaneous. Especially with CVS you can instantaneously edit a document. It's pretty much live editing that any party can make. Along with other things like that. It's the same type of thing with php and with Dreamweaver and things like that.

Researcher

OK. Which technologies are widely used in the field of PR? These seem like technologies that are unique to your situation. What do you think most PR practitioners are using?

Joey

I would guess the Internet, databases. I think they use a lot of traditional forms of research. I'm just not sure that... I don't know. As far as I know that's pretty much it. I just may not be thinking of some.

Researcher

Sure.

Joey

I know on a daily basis that's what I come into contact with.

Researcher

What about blogs and wikis?

Joey

Ok.

Researcher

Do you think these are still in the process of being introduced and used? Have they or have they not been adopted by most practitioners?

Joey

I don't think blogs and wikis have been adopted yet by most practitioners because we have a lot of practitioners that have been in the marketplace for a very long time. I guess you would call these late adopters and laggards like you referred to earlier. There are these who I come into contact with sometimes, they are afraid of the Internet even, they are afraid of computers in some cases. They are unfamiliar with the type of assets that those two things can be. They are definitely not new to the general marketplace. Obviously people have been using them for a while now, message boards, blogs, wikis. I think wikis aren't new to the scientific community. I haven't seen where wikis have been adopted by the general consumer, the general marketing community or public relations community. But as far as blogs where people have been using them, I think that the more savvy, cutting edge PR practitioners are utilizing that tool, just like they did when chat rooms first came out.

Researcher

Ok. What about other technologies like intranets, Access Grids, video conferencing, PDAs, Grid communication? Have you seen PR people using anything like that?

Joey

I've definitely seen it and I've dealt with a few of those a couple of times in my short experience. I definitely think they can be an important tool.

Researcher

Which ones?

Joey

I've experienced Access Grids for video conferencing. I think intranets have been around for a while in definition anyway, so they are not, I don't think they are as widely used today just because there is not a need for them anymore, you know? I think things like wikis and internal mail servers have made intranets obsolete.

Researcher

So you said you've used Access Grids in video conferencing before, tell me about that.

Joey

To me it's a very neat thing. I think in this day and age it is about how quickly you can receive information, about how quickly you can disseminate information and a lot of times with Access Grids, whether people are only a few hundred miles apart or completely on the other side of the world, you gain instant access to those technologies so you're able to instantly communicate with them. The good thing about Access Grid technologies and video conferencing is that a lot of times on the phone, or through email or blogs or wikis or whatever, you don't get the nonverbal part of the communication. I think nonverbals are a very important part of the communication process and you can still have that important part of it through Access Grids and video conferencing, whereas you can't have that through emails or through written forms of communication.

Researcher

Ok, I'm wondering why you do or don't use some of the technologies that you use. Are there factors that influence your decisions? Like costs, benefits, consequences. What makes you use something?

Joey

I think as with any new technology you're kind of leery of the time it would take you to learn and get fully acclimated to it, and be comfortable using it. Much less having the people who would use those tools to communicate with. If it would be easier to just stay where the things are for the time being- and a lot of that could be just with the way I operate, I'm more of a last minute person. Not in a technology sense, I'm all for the latest technology. I guess it's just more of an error in judgment and planning and allowing for time to learn that new technology.

Researcher

So you think that any new technologies that you're not using is because of a time thing?

Joey

I think first of all, whether it's true or not, I have this aversion to it because I feel like it would take me a long time to learn it. Whether that may be the case or not. It could be extremely user friendly, but if I'm under this impression that's always going to kind of influence my actions, I guess. Then like I said, secondly, it's making the time to actually figure it out.

Researcher

Ok, thanks. Tell me about some of the innovators that you know.

Joey

I work with a lot of innovators, being at (unnamed high-tech organization). These people really help me to be on the cutting edge of technology. I'm not actually on the cutting edge, but I think I can ride on the coat tails of the people who are on the cutting edge. These researchers that I work with are— some people say they think outside of the box, well with them I don't even think there's a box involved at all. They are forward thinking. They don't seem to think within the realm of possibilities at all. It's more about – let's do something that's never been done before.

Researcher

So you would call them that 2.5% of innovators?

Joey

I think I would. I think that definition would apply to them.

Researcher

And you work with these people daily?

Joey

Yes.

Researcher

How can you tell that they are innovators, or how can you tell if someone is an innovator?

Joey

They are always coming up with new ideas that are totally outside of the realm of anything that's ever been done before. They are coming up with ideas that the technology hasn't even been created yet or the infrastructure hasn't even been created yet for them to follow through with that idea.

Researcher

Ok. You said that you work with them. Tell me about the interaction that you have with them.

When do you see them? How does that go?

Joey

Well I do PR and marketing for (unnamed high-tech organization) and they do the research for (unnamed high-tech organization) so it's important that we interact closely. I don't spend as much time with them as I'd like to just because there is this barrier there. I think within public relations we have to – you don't always get to think in this abstract world like a researcher might because of the people that you are communicating with. You have to think very concretely, and that's not always how these people think at all. One reason that I call them innovators is because they are always coming up with something that I have no idea what they are talking about, and I have to go and research it. And even after researching it, while trying to understand it, it still takes me a while to fully grasp the concept.

Researcher

When do you see them and where? How often?

Joey

I see them on a daily basis. Several times a day at work. Sometimes these are formal meetings, sometimes they are informal. Sometimes these are lunch meetings or we get together after work.

Researcher

Do you think there is a difference between the formal meetings and the informal meetings? Do you get more out of the formal meetings or the informal meetings?

Joey

Oh, I'd definitely say you would get more out of the informal meetings. For instance there is a conference that we go to every year called supercomputing and just the time spent afterwards in the evenings getting dinner or just walking around the towns that we happen to be in, you learn so much from them personally that they feel so much more comfortable making sure that you understand their work because you've taken, you've made an investment in them personally.

They want you to know and understand fully where their passion for their work comes from and I think they take that extra care in explaining it and making sure you understand it.

Researcher

Cool. Do you think they are "opinion leaders"?

Joey

How do you mean?

Researcher

I mean could they convince people to do things?

Joey

I think a part of being an opinion leader is being charismatic enough to influence people. I don't think charisma is something that necessarily all researchers have. But when you do get that perfect mix of incredible intelligence and just a charismatic personality, I think that's when you're able to influence people and make them understand your work and then adopt your work. Or at least back it as an intelligent idea.

Researcher

Cool. So do these innovators ever influence you to adopt certain innovations?

Joey

Yes and no. A lot of times we are kind of forced into adopting their technology just because that's what they use on a daily basis. Compared to them I am a laggard I guess, just because they are so much of an early adopter. So I'm kind of forced into using their technology because it's sometimes the only way to communicate with them.

Researcher

Ok. How do they share new technologies with you? And what do they show you when they do?

You mentioned you were forced into it.

Joey

A lot of times I'll share with them what I need to do for a project and they will suggest, "yeah, there's a new software package," or "there's some hardware that would make that so much easier for you." "You should really check it out. Let me show you." And then they'll give me a quick tutorial. Really informal and usually it takes me a few tries to finally figure it out and get it going. And then we're off.

Researcher

What have they shown you?

Joey

Like I said before that, CVS technology, for document editing and sharing. That was a technology we used with a group of about – I'd say about ten people to work on a document, which I've tried to do using (laughing) a Microsoft program before, and this was a lot easier. It wasn't very graphically pleasing, but as far as usability and ease of use, it worked out much better, I thought.

Researcher

Ok. What about if somebody was closer to your field of study, like say another PR practitioner.

Let's say they introduced an innovation to you. Would you be more likely to consider using that

new innovation if it were introduced to you by someone who is not an innovator? Someone who is closer to your field? And if so, why do you think that is?

Joey

Well I think innovators can be in my field. I probably would be more likely to adopt because hopefully with this person we would speak the same quote unquote language. They would know exactly how to communicate with me. First of all with words I would need to hear to make me want to adopt. PR in general is about getting people to adopt your beliefs or your company's beliefs, or something like that. So in general, they would know how to communicate with me. But then we'd also kind of think on the same wavelength. As opposed to the researchers who are using highly technical words that are very field specific. This PR practitioner could use field specific terminology but I'd be familiar with it because I'm also in the field.

Researcher

Ok. Cool. Now let's talk about PR practitioners as adopters. What about these PR people that work in highly technical organizations, like NASA or the National Science Foundation, or a place like the MIT Media Lab? Are there organizations that are so close to innovation that it affects the technologies their PR people adopt? As opposed to other practitioners?

Joey

I definitely think since you're in an environment that's so innovative naturally, I think it definitely makes you more prone to want to use the latest technologies. Sometimes you're quote unquote forced into it just because of the people you work with. In order to communicate with them you have to use the technologies that they use. But also on the other hand, your other

constituents, the general public, or, you mentioned NASA or the NSF. They're all communicating with the general taxpayer and the federal government and all these entities. Most of the time they are not highly technical at all.

Researcher

You mean the PR people there?

Joey

No, the people that you're communicating with. So you have to be skilled in both languages to be able to communicate. You have to be able to interpret the information that the experts are giving you, that you work with, these researchers, these early adopters, and translate it into a more common language that the general public or the government is going to understand for your late adopters and your laggards. Which I think is important because on that bell curve you showed, those percentages probably make up most of the people in the country.

Researcher

Ok. Let's talk a bit more about these people who work in these high-tech organizations. Do you think their close proximity innovators would affect their careers in any way?

Joey

I definitely see how it could. Because I think when you deal with anything so technical you have to gather information that's highly technical and then translate it into a language that the majority of people can understand, I think once people see that you can do that and do that well, they

pretty much assume that you can handle any information below that well, or even better.

Because not so much quote unquote translation is needed to go from highly technical to normal.

Researcher

So do you think it affects salaries, power, or roles within an organization? Any of those?

Joey

I definitely think it has the potential to. I think it would be hard to draw a direct connection, but there is definitely a correlation between the two.

Researcher

What do you think the correlation is?

Joey

I think people like future employers, after you work at a place that is highly technical I'm sure they're definitely impressed by that, but also they know that you dealt with things of a highly technical nature and you're basically worth more because if you're really good at translating from highly technical to normal you're going to be in my opinion awesome at going from normal to normal.

Researcher

The reason that I ask is because some of the research that I've seen shows that technology can help people with their salaries, roles and power in an organization. I'm trying to find out if there

is a difference in these career issues for people who work in high-tech centers compared to practitioners who don't I'm trying to find out if they would have better career paths because of their proximity to innovators. Do you think that your experience has shown a difference like this?

Joey

I definitely think that information is power. So in that sense these people who deal with technology. I would think that there is a difference. I don't think that I've experienced it, but just from what I feel about how I view innovators and the effects of being so close to them, how that can make you more of an innovator, or at least get you thinking in an innovative way, I definitely think it can have positive implications on one's career. However, I don't think that the PR community as a whole has recognized that yet. In opinion I would have to agree that comparing a PR practitioner from a highly technical research or scientific community to that of a PR practitioner at a regular company or art museum - I think there's a higher probability for the person from the scientific community to have the upper hand as far as thinking in new ways.

Researcher

What do you see that upper hand as being?

Joey

The reason I say that is - What I was saying was, I don't think that it's been accepted as practice in the general PR community. I definitely think the PR community respects things of a highly technical nature, but because in general they don't come in contact with it, it's hard for them to

understand. So, I think it would be hard to rank one as more knowledgeable or more creative over the other.

Researcher

Yeah. Do you think that the general PR practitioner public believes that technology can help them in their careers?

Joey

Oh yeah, I definitely think that's true.

Researcher

So maybe people haven't seen any correlation between working with high-tech people or working with innovators.

Joey

I think that's true. Because – this may be true or just not realized yet, but in general I don't think that technology that I come in contact with in my job is recognized as valuable to the PR community yet.

Researcher

I see.

Joey

So I think all that feeds into the fact that it's hard to - because they don't come into contact with it. I think that PR practitioners can appreciate it because it is something that is highly technical, something that is hard to understand. And they can recognize that person as having information power because of that. But because their understanding of it is very limited it is hard for them to give any more power.

Researcher

As a practitioner who works in a high-tech center, do you think that you could influence other practitioners who are not working in high-tech centers with technology use? Do your peers in the PR industry look to you as the techy guy who will know how to answer what is useful?

Joey

I definitely think that's true. Because you are viewed as having information power, because you work with these innovators people definitely see you as having information power in knowing what's the latest thing, what's the coolest thing. But like I said, because they're not in contact with innovators it's hard to influence them. Because they don't - I don't think their minds think that way. Because they haven't been "forced" like I have, to think like a researcher or to think like an innovator. That's not to say that there couldn't be innovators in the PR field even.

Researcher

I got it. Do you think there are any personality characteristics of PR people who adopt earlier than others?

Joey

I think that if we were talking about advertising I'd probably say no, because I think if I were to draw a line, I think advertising is more creative and requires more higher level creativity than public relations so therefore in public relations I think you would need to definitely be more creative. And as a result of that be more open-minded. And you can't think about the box like I was referring to earlier.

Researcher

Ok. How does age affect technology adoption?

Joey

It has a direct affect. Obviously there are some exceptions, but new technologies are coming out daily and as people grow as practitioners they find methods and technologies that work well for them. Thus reducing the need for them to adopt new technologies or even familiarize themselves with new technologies.

Researcher

So what is the difference between older practitioners and younger practitioners? What is the impact as far as technology adoption?

Joey

I definitely think younger practitioners would be the earlier adopters of the two.

Researcher

Ok. What about gender?

Joey

What do you mean?

Researcher

Do females adopt technology faster than males, or do males adopt technology faster than females?

Joey

I don't think there's anything concrete on that.

Researcher

Tell me your opinion.

Joey

I guess I'd have to say that in general, I think males tend to adopt technology faster than females. We all learn in psychology that males' brains are designed to deal with things more technical, more logically, more rationally. So I think that as a result it's easier to familiarize ourselves with new technology. So we're not afraid or averse to it.

Researcher

Do you see examples of that often?

Joey

Yes. (laughs) I do see that. And I think it has a lot to do with what I just said.

Researcher

What's an example of differences that you've seen with gender in technology?

Joey

Well, the majority of the researchers that I work with are men. I think the majority of your computer workers are men, the majority of your engineers. The majority of the highly technical fields or even just technical fields are made up of males. I mean historically.

Researcher

But do you see that?

Joey

Yes.

Researcher

What do you think about socioeconomics? Does that affect adoption? Like education ...

Joey

I definitely think all those factors affect adoption. First of all with your socioeconomic class- obviously the more money you make, or the more money you have, the more technology you can afford. And the more you have technology around, the more likely you are to adopt newer forms

of technology. The more you can afford, the newer things you can have. Usually the more money you have, the more education you have, the more the opportunity to obtain. The more education you have, the more technology you come into contact with.

Researcher

Ok, thank you. Now this is the last part of our interview. I want to talk about the effects of technology and innovations. I'm wondering how does technology affect your career?

Joey

You mean generally? Um...

Researcher

When I say career, I mean roles, power salaries. Does technology change that for you?

Joey

I think it has the potential to, I think because I am relatively new to the work place, I haven't seen this directly yet. But I think the more you learn, the more valuable of an asset you become to the company. This is something that I hope to do and hope to enact in my career. So as a result the more value you add to the company, obviously you can command a higher salary. The more technologies you know how to utilize, it's all related. The more technologies you know, the higher efficiency you can have for your organization.

Researcher

How does technology make you a better practitioner?

Joey

I definitely think It helps you to be more efficient because you're always learning new and better ways to do the same thing. But unfortunately in PR, I don't think there has been a technology that's been identified yet that you could not have PR without. There's not a technology that without which PR would cease to exist.

Researcher

Ok.

Joey

I think this goes back to why so many PR practitioners who don't deal with things of a technical nature don't adopt, or are late to adopt. Now, like I said, I'm new to the workforce, so it may be that I haven't seen it yet, but I don't think that's the case. Because I think that if it were, I think it would've made its way into the curriculum that I was a part of in school.

Researcher

True.

Joey

But I definitely think that as a result of that, adopting technology can set you apart from these practitioners that don't adopt, or are late to adopt. Because you can always know how to do the same old PR thing, but to know how to do it better, or more efficiently, or ... I think technology

is just a way to set yourself apart from your competition when you're competing for salaries or for jobs and things of that nature.

Researcher

When you say jobs do you mean promotions?

Joey

Yeah, or new jobs.

Researcher

Ok, and these jobs would be better than the old job, and make you more powerful?

Joey

Yeah, when you're going for a new, better position with a different company. I think that's definitely when technology becomes even more valuable - when you leave the place that you learned how to do the technology. Because you're not around people who know how to use it or are familiar with it anymore. So when you go into a new environment, it's easy to impress people. You can even more so set yourself apart from, if it's a new job, the people you're competing for that job with.

Researcher

I see. Cool. Do you think technology could make you a better manager?

Joey

I think it can make you more efficient, so I think in that case it can make you a better manager, but I think a lot of the management skills you learn are more interpersonal, and at the outset, not technology related. In some cases I guess I would say that technology could easily make you a poorer manager, just because – now when I say technology I mean things like email don't require face to face communication - I think that when you're only using email or blogs or things like that - To be a good manager, I believe that you have to have face to face communication. And you're so engrossed in a technology like that it can just lead to poorer relationships with your employees.

Researcher

How does technology help you communicate with publics?

Joey

It's kind of weird to think about how they did it before there were computers or email, because that's exactly what I use in my job to communicate with those publics. Rarely do I use TV anymore, rarely do we use newspapers directly. It always begins with some form of digital dissemination. Whether it's email or whether it's posting it to our Website, in some cases posting it to a message board, that's what I use, and I think it's because of the environment that I work in. Because those are the quickest and most efficient ways to communicate with the general public.

Researcher

How does technology make you more collaborative?

Joey

Well, I was talking about CVS and Access Grids before, they allow people who are not necessarily close in proximity to interact with each other, and get that – what I feel is -important face to face interaction for meetings on projects or anything like that. So you gather these people together and allow them to have face to face communication, or screen to screen, I guess. You're enabling them to be interactive. You're enabling them to communicate with each other in a way that isn't possible necessarily through email or through telephone even. Because you're able to see expressions.

Researcher

Yeah.

Joey

And I think those nonverbals are at the heart of collaborating and creating as a group.

Researcher

How does technology help you with research?

Joey

It makes it so much easier. It's all about efficiency. I guess that's technology's greatest asset. It makes gathering research so much more quickly and with the Internet we've got tons of

information at our fingertips. And it's catalogued in a way that's easily understood. It makes it so much easier to research, organize. It makes it easier to learn.

Researcher

How does technology make you more creative?

Joey

I guess at the heart of it, technology makes you think outside of the box that you would normally think in. It also allows you to do things that enable you to think so much more creatively.

Whether it is a different type of graphic or a direct mail campaign that you do over the Internet, the possibilities are basically endless. I think that's why it makes you more creative because you're not limited or constrained by paper or printing or by distance or proximity or anything like that.

Researcher

You talked about efficiency, what about production? How does technology speed up production?

Joey

Because things can easily be digital, sometimes it totally wipes the need for production away. So much of it can be disseminated digitally through email or Websites. You don't have to produce things anymore, it takes printing and paper and makes them obsolete. But when the needs do arise, the need for printing or making DVDs or production, because these things can be put into a digital format so quickly these days, it takes many steps out of the whole production process. It

wipes them out, so you don't have to do them anymore. It makes transferring data faster and it can buy you a lot of time in the production process.

Researcher

How does technology make you more effective at crisis communications?

Joey

The efficiency of it and the speed that technology enables PR practitioners to utilize helps those practitioners in a crisis situation. It allows us to disseminate information extremely quickly.

Because information in a crisis changes so quickly it allows us to get those changes and information out quickly.

Researcher

Have you ever experienced a time when you used technology while working in a crisis situation?

Joey

Well with the recent hurricane Katrina crisis we depended heavily on technology to complement older methods of communications like telephones. Even telephones became obsolete because there were so many power outages, and the cell phone networks were overloaded. We relied on the Web, email, instant messenger, message boards and blogs to communicate with people to get information out and to gather new information ourselves to disseminate to people who could only reach us over the telephone.

Researcher

How does technology make you better at issues management?

Joey

It enables you to respond much more quickly. And not only that, much of the technology that we have talked about is for the most part free whereas it may take a long time to put together a commercial, or to get a reporter to do a piece on your organization. Web space is endless, you can update it very quickly and it's free. It's the cheapest form. There is hardly any production time required. It can change as quickly as public opinion does.

Researcher

What about the PR profession in general? Are we leading the way, or lagging behind the majority? Where do you think we fall on the chart? Are we early adopters, early majority, majority, or late majority?

Joey

(Pointing to the early majority section.) I think my profession falls to the left of the majority on the chart. To be effective as a PR practitioner you have to be ahead of the general population. You have to be smarter than the general population. Not to say that public relations is about outsmarting or outfoxing anyone, but you have to be smarter than them. In a sense you're out-thinking them and anticipating needs and opinions. Sometimes you have to develop needs. That requires you to infer information to process information, to have an intuition about the publics you're going to communicate with and how they are going to respond to something. By being smarter than them, you have come this far, you know how to communicate with everyone behind

the line you fall on on the chart. As a result, that's the majority of the population. For PR practitioners in general, that's your blue collar, American workforce that the majority of PR practitioners have to communicate with.

Researcher

In general, are you someone who adopts technology early or late? Where do you think you fall on the chart?

Joey

(Pointing to the early adopter category.) I put myself ahead of PR practitioners in general just because of the people I work with because I think you become a product of that environment. Coming into it you may not be very innovative inherently, but you learn to think like an innovator. At least I have, because when you work for a firm that's highly technical, they become one of your publics. Like I said before, you have to know how to communicate with your publics to be able to anticipate their needs and anticipate their responses. You become that you have to learn how to do that, and the only way to be able to do that is to think like an innovator. In doing so you become an innovator yourself.

Researcher

Ok, that's all of the questions I had for you today. I'd just like to double check on some major themes that I heard from you today.

Joey

Ok.

Researcher

I feel like the concept of efficiency was a big benefit for you. Is that right?

Joey

Yes.

Researcher

And it looks like you have interacted with innovators mostly through your job working in a high-tech environment, is that right?

Joey

Yeah.

Researcher

Well I know we are out of time now, but I was wondering if there was anything I missed out on.

Joey

The only thing I want to be sure you understand is that the technologies I have learned are dealing with what was exposed to me at the supercomputing center that I work for. I'm sure there are lots of technologies out there that I wouldn't have been exposed to yet because those technologies aren't used in a center like mine.

Researcher

Ok, I understand that.

Joey

Great. That's all I wanted to check on.

Researcher

Remember, everything you said today will be confidential. I just want to say thanks again for meeting with me. I learned a lot from your responses and I know that they will be useful to my research.

## **Katie Kellogg Interview**

Researcher

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this interview. I'd like to tell you a little bit about my research and then I'll ask you some questions about your career.

The information I learn from you today will help me to gain a better understanding of how my research topic relates to practitioners in the field. Your answers will help me to complete my thesis research in public relations and technology. The focus of the research is to learn about what influences practitioners to use new technologies, and how these technologies affect their careers. Research has shown that practitioners have used technology to move up in their careers, and I want to dig a little deeper on that topic to find out how innovation can help our profession. I'm looking forward to hearing your input on this topic, so thank you again for agreeing to help me. Your feedback will give me valuable information for my research.

Your participation here is totally confidential and voluntary, so if you need to drop out for any reason during the interview, that is fine. Do you have any questions now?

Katie

No, I don't have any questions yet.

Researcher

In this discussion we will talk about how new innovations diffuse into our work lives as PR people. I'll be looking for information on how you learn about new technologies and the interaction that you have with innovators who might share new technologies with you. The terms I'll be using in this study are very simple. I'll be talking about the term "Innovation." For

this study, we will use the term innovation in the broadest sense of the word. An innovation is any new technology or tool that helps you to do your job. When we talk about “Innovators,” we’ll be talking about your experiences interacting with those people who adopt technologies first. I’m sure you know some people who know just about everything dealing with the latest innovations, and they are very close to the pulse of what is going on with what products are new in the marketplace. These people are so close to the innovations that they sometimes invent their own versions of new technologies. You might interact directly with these individuals who stay on the cutting edge of technology, or you might only interact with these people through mutual acquaintances. This chart is called the Diffusion of innovations bell curve. We’ll be referring to it later in the interview. This is a breakdown of people in a population. It shows where the innovators and opinion leaders lie. Later on in the interview I’d like for you to place yourself somewhere on the chart as well as the PR population in general. The initial questions are fairly general. These are about innovators and innovations. What technologies are you using in your PR job, and why?

Katie

Well right now I guess in some sense I am more of a traditionalist because I do a lot of content creation, so. I mean, sure your typical word programs, but for example we have someone who does our Webpages, so I’ve never had to learn much with regards to html. And a lot of things in the realm of design are also segmented. Ivan does the design. So I really feel that I am one of the least technologically savvy people in the organization.

Researcher

Is it because you’re managing the people who do the tasks that are technology based?

Katie

Well they've been farmed out. I know PageMaker and I know you know some basic design and um Ivan has taught me some things so that I can do basic things. So that way I don't have to bug him. And in terms of adaptation of the technology to our Website or to our email, you know, I'm familiar with the kinds of programs that are out there. We do the email blasts, we do the mass emails sometimes. You know, I prefer doing electronic promotions. I'd like to move away from paper and folders and fliers. I mean we're moving more toward electronic PDFs toward things that can be accessible from the Website. Even at our booth, for two years now we've done liquid posters. It's an interactive touch screen and they can touch where they want to get information and it comes up on the screen. We have a video component to (unnamed high-tech organization), so I've learned a lot from them on what is possible. So when it comes to something like this, we usually do things that are more electronic. For example, we had some people come in with these big posters, and this was one of the few times I was able to get on the exhibitor floor. They had these big physical posters.

Researcher

You mean printed posters?

Katie

Right. And I told them that I didn't want them in the booth. If they would've gotten with us earlier, we might have been able to do something, but I didn't plan on that. You know, in terms of technology that's available for promotion I feel like I'm pretty savvy, but in terms of me actually using the technology I don't think that I'm at that level.

Researcher

Do you think that there are things that you're using, even through your team, that are more innovative than the rest of the PR general population?

Katie

Oh definitely. We stay abreast of what's the newest technologically. It's because we're more able to get someone in our organization to create something similar for us through open source. I think having that open source capability is great because if we don't have the budget for it, we can do something in house because we have the people available in house who can make these things happen. It's definitely an advantage that I have over the other communicators in the other parts of PR. A difference between me and the other communicators at the university.

Researcher

What do you think is the difference between you and the other communicators?

Katie

Well, with Ohio State University, it's the third largest university in the United States. With the people that are doing PR for the departments, or for the different centers, they are part of a gigantic organization, so they are just one of the cogs, one piece. I feel like with the supercomputing center, I'm an integral part of this microcosm that allows me to have a greater say in the organization in terms of promotions or what we do for publicity. So I don't think that other practitioners in the university get that level of authority. They don't get that up to the minute type of technology that I get. They don't get the updates.

Researcher

Do you spend a lot of time working with innovators?

Katie

Right, well I talk to them in the halls, or I'll overhear a conversation that they're having, or I'll be sitting in on a presentation where our director is talking about some of the projects that we're doing, some of the technology. I know the language, I know what we're doing. I certainly don't know about specific code, I can't talk code, and I can't talk on the level that they do, but um. You know, some of them, we don't talk, but there are others, that um in the organization that are much more communicative, there are some in the organization who are almost the translators, so I know who to go to when I need explanations.

Researcher

Is it because you have more of an informal relationship with those individuals?

Katie

I've just figured out over the years who is better at explaining things in lay persons terms. I don't have much of an interpersonal relationship with them. I look at it more as going to them as resources.

Researcher

It's just that this person is a good communicator and you know who to talk to.

Katie

Right. They can explain in a way that lets me explain it to someone else. (Laughing,) or I know a combination of people who can explain it to me. Then I know I can get the full story if I go to these two or three people.

Researcher

Ok. Have they ever shown you something that you can use in your job?

Katie

Yeah. Well we developed this doc manager system, and I don't think it's going to be successful because it has some usability issues that really make it hard. It's become more of a repository than a document management system it's more of an archive, but we didn't have standard set up on how to label the documents and how to organize them, so I think that's where that failed, but um when they show me something, they don't even have to convince me. I'm always up for whatever they have that will work. Sometimes I find out through emails that they're updating certain systems and some of the people that work there, their interest lies in developing data management systems, so they're not necessarily the people doing the high performance computing research, but they're the ones who keep us running, and they have good information. But I even get ideas from some of the students, they come in and some of them are working in CS, working in the supercomputing center and they have a little bit more time than I do to do some of the research and find out what are some of the applications.

Researcher

So it sounds like you're learning a lot from them. Do you think you would be more likely to be convinced if it were another PR practitioner sharing the information with you instead of an innovator?

Katie

Well for me, that's Ivan. He's the one who filters things for me and that makes it easy for me. He's like "Hey, have you seen this? And he'll show me a Website, or he'll show me something along those lines, but we also have a subgroup with a playlab and the person in charge of that group is in charge of the biomedical applications. And he and his group are really into visualizations so I learn a lot about viz when I go and see them. And when we go on tours of the center, that's the main place that I show off. When we do tours I don't go any place else really. It's a new space and that group is always completely up to date on the latest tools. They're the showcase of what we're doing in HPC. So that's another level.

Researcher

Have you ever felt that you have a career advantage being in high-tech PR when compared to practitioners in other fields?

Katie

Oh, I think so. I definitely do. Even if we don't use it, I can talk the talk. Whenever I have decided to look around and see what I could do and send out resumes I usually peak people's interests, but I never go because it's just too fascinating an area. You know, when there've been political problems, and even sometimes when there are not political problems, I start looking,

and I think about maybe going somewhere where it's more mainstream where it isn't such a challenge.

Researcher

Do you think that you would have to take a salary cut if you ever decided to move out of high-tech? or would that make you take a step back in your career power or role?

Katie

Well for one thing, I wouldn't go anyplace where I had to take a step back in my position. If I took another job at the university, I'd take a pay cut. Probably in industry I could make more money, but that would be high-tech industry. Comparatively speaking I do have a higher salary than other communicators in the university.

Researcher

Do you think it's because of the things that you know and the information that you're around?

Katie

Right. I think that yeah. I also think that there's this viewpoint in academia still that scientific, quantitative, technology type knowledge is more valued than qualitative, language arts, social sciences. So I think given that, I have an advantage. So quite honestly, I'm the social sciences, language arts, qualitative person, working in a quantitative, high-tech, scientific environment.

Researcher

Yeah. Very interesting. We are in a very female dominated field in public relations. I'm wondering if you think females adopt technology as fast as males.

Katie

I think it's a cultural thing. Well I'm co-director of a young women's summer institute, so I'm trying to help reverse that trend, but there's definitely a bias that's in place that men do science or math better than women. So I don't believe it personally. But I think it has affected my path. But in the environment that I'm in now, I feel that I have an advantage that other women in other fields don't have. In our organization we have a high performance computing director who is female. And I work in a supercomputing conference where a lot of the people involved in the conference who are leading this effort are female. Even though it is on the whole, predominately male.

Researcher

If you had to place yourself on this curve, along with the PR people from the general PR population, where do you think you would fall?

Katie

I'd be right here. I'd be an early adopter.

Researcher

Do you think the general PR population would be there as well?

Katie

No, I think they'd be in the late majority. They'd be right here comparatively speaking.

Researcher

Why do you think that is?

Katie

Well I think that in other organizations there's more of a status quo kind of culture where they use things that have worked before. There's usually no incentive to be innovative, so I mean if you're doing the job and you're, I mean just from the conversations that I've had with other people in other fields that do communications, it just seems like they stick with your basic email or electronic versions of communications. Now there is an exception. We have looked at blogs. I think we've determined as an organization that it's not useful for us, for our purposes, but I think the verdict is still out on that. So I think in that case, there are things that we could be doing that other organizations have done. You know, things that are pretty innovative. I don't know about PR firms, though. Because their job is to find out what the latest and greatest is so they can stay ahead of the competition. So when an organization hires someone like that, that's already abreast of all the latest marketing trends it might change things. That would be interesting to find out.

Researcher

There are so many differences in PR people depending on their backgrounds. Do you come from a journalism background? I'm wondering if there's a difference there.

Katie

I do come from a journalism background. In college I was trained in journalism. My major was English with a concentration in journalism. Then I had a choice between going to journalism school or the school of rhetoric and communication at UVA, and I ended up going there, so. And then I went on to do some doctoral work that I never finished because I didn't finish my dissertation because I got into this field. And I was on the college newspaper, and I worked for a local paper during summers but then I started moving into the academic side and I had actually planned on being a professor in rhetoric, in communication, and then I got involved with the city. I needed a summer job. I couldn't teach anymore, so I ended up starting up at the mayor's office on this task force on technology and working with those folks. But it wasn't high-tech, it was IT. And I was getting involved with that and this job came open at (unnamed high-tech organization) and it was quite a bit of a learning curve in the beginning. Not only that, but the acronym jungle.

Researcher

Well before we close, is there anything that you'd like to help me clarify? Anything I should know or I should think about?

Katie

Well I think in terms of the careers, I think if I decided to move into something else, I think I've made up my mind that I have to stay in high-technology. Even though I explore other options, I don't think that it would make sense at this point. I don't think that it would inspire me as much as the high-technology does. There are some problems with it. Like I said before, there's a focus on quantitative being better than qualitative. But I really can't see myself doing anything else right now, and if I do decide to move, I'd move to another supercomputing center.

Researcher

Well thank you so much.

Katie

I'd be happy to follow up with anything that you need.

## **Matthew Bernard Interview**

Researcher

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this interview. I'd like to tell you a little bit about my research and then I'll ask you some questions about your career.

The information I learn from you today will help me to gain a better understanding of how my research topic relates to practitioners in the field. Your answers will help me to complete my thesis research in public relations and technology. The focus of the research is to learn about what influences practitioners to use new technologies, and how these technologies affect their careers. Research has shown that practitioners have used technology to move up in their careers, and I want to dig a little deeper on that topic to find out how innovation can help our profession. I'm looking forward to hearing your input on this topic, so thank you again for agreeing to help me. Your feedback will give me valuable information for my research.

Your participation here is totally confidential and voluntary, so if you need to drop out for any reason during the interview, that is fine. Do you have any questions now?

Matthew

No problem.

Researcher

In this discussion we will talk about how new innovations diffuse into our work lives as PR people. I'll be looking for information on how you learn about new technologies and the interaction that you have with innovators who might share new technologies with you. The terms I'll be using in this study are very simple. I'll be talking about the term "Innovation." For

this study, we will use the term innovation in the broadest sense of the word. An innovation is any new technology or tool that helps you to do your job. When we talk about “Innovators,” we’ll be talking about your experiences interacting with those people who adopt technologies first. I’m sure you know some people who know just about everything dealing with the latest innovations, and they are very close to the pulse of what is going on with what products are new in the marketplace. These people are so close to the innovations that they sometimes invent their own versions of new technologies. You might interact directly with these individuals who stay on the cutting edge of technology, or you might only interact with these people through mutual acquaintances. This chart is called the Diffusion of innovations bell curve. We’ll be referring to it later in the interview. This is a breakdown of people in a population. It shows where the innovators and opinion leaders lie. Later on in the interview I’d like for you to place yourself somewhere on the chart as well as the PR population in general. The initial questions are fairly general. These are about innovators and innovations.

Matthew

Email, the Web, Media Map, stuff like that.

Researcher

What technologies are you using that others may not be using? Why?

Matthew

I look at tools in a different way. There are different kinds of tools that different kinds of PR people will be using for different things. You have your standard PR tools to keep track of people you’ll be contacting, and that’s Media Map. It’s the only tool that a PR person will ever need. It’s very comprehensive. We have such a niche market. You know everybody and

sometimes you feel like you don't need anything like that. You spend about 3 or 4 thousand dollars a year for this, but it's totally worth it. The contacts are updated several times a year. You have to go outside of the people you know.

Researcher

Is this like an electronic Bacon's guide?

Matthew

That's exactly what it is. Bacons bought Media Map. At one time you had Bacons with those big old books. Now you can get Media Map on a subscription basis online. And a PR person could not live without it. With Media Map, it's not just high-tech, it's everything. So if you guys were doing an announcement on lessons learned from Katrina, you know, new methods for this, new methods for that, you might go to publications that talk about health and safety issues, you might go to publications that talk about the technology you're using. It may be a different focus. You break it down and find the individual reporters and their beats, you'll find the things they like and don't like, how they like to be pitched. Now with your professionals on the road, you have it all together and this is not what they teach in school. It's invaluable. So for the identification of your target, you don't need much more than that and the Web. As far as sourcing of information, you want to do some research and find out what other people are doing. That's where you want to get the inside track and get on with things like Access Grid. Or the inside track of knowing where those things are. There's no standardized way of knowing where those things are other than Googling it.

Researcher

Yeah. So when you said Googling it, you mean you're doing your research online.

Matthew

Yeah. Particularly with technology. For example, Linux Networks just came out with a new supercluster, or supercomputer, or whatever it's called. If Linux Networks were getting ready to roll it out for the mainstream IT media, they would go do some quick research and say, you think you know this, but you better do your homework and do some research, find out who else is launching something similar, what's the other one most likely to have, how do you compare that to the IBM XYZ, or the HP or Intel product. You need to do that research in order to be prepared to pitch it to the editors.

Researcher

Yeah.

Matthew

So the one thing, I'm kind of going overboard on this, I know, but the one thing that has really changed over the last 20- 25 years since I've been doing PR, is that editors are far less tolerant of people that come to them and try to get coverage and haven't done their homework. You know what's happened with a lot of mainstream publications is there's been a change even since 2000, there have been a lot of cutbacks in publications because advertising dollars for publications have cut back. They don't just lay off advertising staff, they lay off editorial staff. They've got to save money. And now an editor that once had this particular beat, is now covering all this. The job is so much more complicated, they're covering topics that they're not that intimately

familiar with, and they want all the help they can get. And if you're just blasting out news releases, and you're going to them and they ask you a question, "so Researcher, that is so interesting, who else is doing a hurricane Katrina type project like that?" If you say, "You know, I have no idea." You could've had a golden opportunity to score a home run with editorial coverage, if you would've helped that person and been a resource, but you missed that golden opportunity. I have a very close working relationship with a lot of very key editors around the world and they all have given me technology coverage. I've kind of grown up with them over the last twenty years. And it's the same old story. We have a whole generation, I guess I could say, of public relations young kids coming out of school, who are inadequately trained on how to pitch and how to work with the media. That is the single biggest complaint at the conferences I go to. So how do you get past that? You use tools like Media Map. Let's take your Katrina story, let's say you had a very interesting angle. You're thinking, this should be in USA Today, or the New York Times, I'm going to contact John Markoff at the New York Times, and pitch him, you better have your act together and know how you're going to do the pitch. You may have a shot at getting through to him if you've done your homework. And Media Map is the first place to start.

Researcher

How does high-tech PR differ from other segments of PR?

Matthew

PR is the core component of a good marketing program. There are hundreds upon hundreds of millions of dollars wasted in the high-tech PR field. These companies go and waste so much time and money putting these self-serving news releases out. It's three and four pages of xy and

z, and this feature, and this functionality, and this speed, and they have not put any kind of a human element on it, or they have not taken into consideration what the publication's readers want to hear. These people send press releases like that to HPC Wire, and sometimes that makes sense because HPC Wire is so specialized, it's readers want to hear about the speed and the features, but even at HPC Wire the readership is expanding and it has to be broader. You have to show the human needs and benefits. You have to look at some of these issues. When you start to do that, your story has more meaning. I see it all the time, I hear from reporters out there who see press releases every day and still feel like there's nothing they can write about. With consumer branded high-tech products this happens all the time. When you're dealing with something where the benefit is obvious it's not so much about the benefit as the perceived value. Does that make sense? Like if I'm doing PR for Ferrari verses doing PR for Dodge, there's a certain statement of perceived value that goes along with it. I don't have to sell the same type of a story. So it's a lot different I believe than non technology types of public relations. Because you're feeling with a different level of emotional buying decision. The emotional buying decision in a lot of areas of technology is, must have in order to compete. The emotional buying decision for most non high-tech products is, must have because it's cool, because it's sexy, because I like it, because I want it. And that's a big difference. So it's a matter of knowing what the benefit is that you're trying to sell to a particular audience. And that is the big difference. In technology, a lot of times the benefit is the nuts and the bolts, so it's different.

Researcher

Do you think you're using the same tools to communicate things that they are?

Matthew

Absolutely. If anything, in certain sectors it's different. Like in this sector, it's a lot less showy. Like with laptops, we've got a guy who has handled PR for Sharp's ultra lightweight notebooks for the last five years. That's a show and tell consumer product. You know, look at this, check this out, here you go. When you're dealing with supercomputers, there's no show and tell involved. Instead, you've got to tell the story on paper, you've got to have the slides and the photos that make it work, but it is the same tool. If you're an editor at business week, and I'm trying to tell you about something that I want you to feature toward the end of the year, I want you to show these unique new gadgets, like a holiday gift idea that would be really cool. I'm going to be showing you the gadgets. I've got to get you excited about it so you'll write about it.

Researcher

So do you see it more as marketing? Finding that benefit and filling the need?

Matthew

Yeah. I had a really good chart and I wish I had it with me, but I had it copywrited years ago, and it's about communications cycles. So you start with identification of the audience that you're trying to communicate your message to. And then moving along to the identification of your key messages as they appeal to those audiences. Then for high level IT decision makers for low level application developers and you can go up and down the ladders. You use the mesh for validation of those messages. And people should do that in PR. So I find a lot of high-tech companies, ...well, when you're finishing that curve, with the validation of the messages and then comes the fine tuning of the messages, based on that, and you keep going around that process before we come back, and by the time you fine tune the messages and you've validated

your audiences you go back and you challenge yourself with your marketing objectives and communication objectives again.

Researcher

Almost like an evaluation in PR when you start with research and end with evaluation of objectives.

Matthew

That's right, and you'll often find that you're keeping your actual business and marketing objectives because you realize as you went through that loop that you can't accomplish the things that you thought you were going to originally. And if it's a bigger market or a flexible market or a bigger opportunity, so yeah. I find that a lot of people on the consumer side for consumer branded products, retail in particular, are much more astute about the message validation, because they are aware of how they have to compete. So I would say that there's more acute work done prior to campaigns being rolled out than after in the non high-tech world. And the people in high-tech, without stereotyping, get so hung up on the bragging rights of technology and how special these things are, that they don't do the message validation. And that is, in this industry, all over the place. From PCs on up to supercomputers. I can't tell you other than here, how many times that I've sat down with a company and I'm interviewing with a company and they can't answer the most simple questions about their competition. And they think that they don't need PR!

Researcher

I assume that the speakers that you pitch in your speaker placement program are very innovative.

Do you...

Matthew

Not necessarily. If you look at the number of speaking opportunities out there in a given year, there might be ten thousand to twenty thousand speaking opportunities for keynote or platform speaking in a given year. So it's just a tremendous amount of them and a lot of companies don't know how to go about placing them. A lot of it comes down to a good PR person coming up with a creative pitch a compelling pitch as to why these speakers had something interesting to say to your audience. If you're trying to convince an editor at Computer Week to cover what you guys are doing with Katrina and the modeling, you've got to have something in that pitch that will let the editor know why their readers would be interested in the story. So many people give a pitch and they don't know the angle or the answers to the questions that are obviously going to be asked. It's something that can't be taught in school and there aren't tools that help you to do it. It takes practice and research and work to learn how to pitch a story.

Researcher

Do you think your career has benefited from your exposure to technology?

Matthew

Well, technology PR is different from consumer PR and I've been involved in technology for so long.

Researcher

So do you think that your technology exposure has helped you with your role in organizations, or decision making power that you've had?

Matthew

Yeah, definitely. I think the best PR people are those that can live and breathe what they are talking about. They really feel the enthusiasm and the emotions about it. If you have a PR person in an agency, if you look at a typical agency model, they make money by having low priced people working at high priced rates. They charge for every little thing that they can because they usually have a lot of overhead so they have an account team and account managers and you have researchers. They usually use a model of two and a half to three times "X". In other words, whatever you're bringing in, it better be two and a half or three times more than what I'm paying you. And I will often have you doubled up. Let's say you're handling three accounts at our agency. HP, IBM and Intel. You go off and you do some research on some of the opportunities that are available in computing. Do you think you'll be charging just one of those accounts, or do you think you'll be charging all three? You'll charge all of them. You don't take that one hour of research and charge one third of an hour to each of them. That's one good formula for the agencies to make money. Let's talk about practical efficiency. The PR people with only one year to seven years of experience will probably just do just an OK job at all of these accounts. It's more efficient for these individuals to just focus on one account so they can know the issues and be more of a representative of that company. They'll know how to write about it. In house PR people should be the most efficient because it's all they do. They live it and breathe it. But if it's just one of 10 companies or five companies that they represent they can't be good at all of them. Ideally, the PR person is the spokesperson for the company.

They're not just an appointment maker. When you become just an appointment maker that's a problem. The PR person should be able to take a pitch from beginning to end and help a reporter to construct the story and research the facts.

Researcher

I'm wondering about creativity. Do you think that being in a technology environment helps you to be more creative?

Matthew

No, I don't think so. I think a lot of high-tech PR people fail to take advantage of the world around them. They get so into high-tech that they forget about the basics of promotion. If you look at some of the products out there and some of the campaigns they appeal to lifestyle and emotion. A lot of people in technology fail to remember that appeal to emotion. They are ok with saying it's the best, it's the biggest, it's the fastest, but there's no emotion. So I'm not sure that exposure to technology helps you to be more creative. It might actually hinder it.

Researcher

Do you think that people who work in high-tech environments adopt technology earlier?

Matthew

I think the high-tech people probably do adopt earlier. The technology is second nature to them. I have a friend that's in consumer PR in Portland for a trucking company. She'll call me to help her with basic Web searches. It's strange how far away from technology some of these PR people are.

Researcher

Have innovators ever showed you things that you can use for your PR job?

Matthew

There are people in the high-tech industry that get technology tools first. These palm pilots and cell phones that get email all this stuff, the techies have had this for years. These hand held devices. PR people in technology are much more comfortable with technology, so they use it faster. The problem with PR is that there's no school that really develops people into PR professionals. It's not the technology either. It's real world experience.

Researcher

Do you think that you're the kind of person that catches on first to technology?

Matthew

Yes absolutely. When you're a PR person working for technology companies that are technically literate, you have to be right up there with them. So absolutely. I think I'm ahead of the rest of the PR field because of my exposure to technology. I think people in the technology field have a leg up in terms of accessing information, research. It becomes more natural and easier for them to get to. When it comes down to it, PR people in any industry are going to have to know how to use a computer. We're all going to have to be able to use Microsoft word or excel or a Mac or whatever. We all have to know how to use presentation software. We're going to have to deliver the same things when it comes down to it. We all have the same tools available to us though. I would expect that PR people outside of technology would have far

more creative work produced with their tools. They remember those emotional buying decisions. Motorola has a great commercial for their new cell phone. They've made five of the coolest most hip commercials that I've seen in years. I watched them on my computer and I was smiling, I felt good about it. I wanted the phone.

Researcher

So do where do you think you fall on the chart in relation to the other PR people in the general practitioner community?

Matthew

I think in general, PR people are late to adopt. I adopt early because it is second nature in my industry. It's helped me to keep up and be innovative in my work. That's an easy one.

Researcher

Well, I know you have to run, but I wanted to just say thanks so much for your time. You've been really helpful to me with my research.

Matthew

Oh, it's no problem. I'm happy to do it.

## **Roy Andrews Interview**

Researcher

Everything you say will be confidential. We will change the names of participants in the transcriptions.

Roy

You can post it on the Internet.

Researcher

(laughing) So if you don't want your name used we will come up with something much more fun to call you, Mr. Andrews. So you know, last time we went over the terms innovations and innovators, and we talked specifically about how the innovations that we were interested in talking about dealt with work, but then a lot of things came up that were dealing more with things that we use in our personal lives that we could use at work, so we can talk about that too. What I'm really interested in is more work related innovations. The way that we defined innovators last time was people who know everything dealing with the latest technologies, they sometimes invent their own technologies, and they stay close to the cutting edge of what is available.

Roy

So you want to know if I know any innovators?

Researcher

Well, the beginning part is more about the technologies that you use. We'll talk about innovators a little bit later in the interview. Then we'll talk about roles, salaries and power in public relations. Other research has shown that roles and salaries and power are affected by technology. I want to know if proximity to innovators will affect roles, salaries and power.

Roy

Sounds good. So what's your first question?

Researcher

What technologies are you using in your PR job and why?

Roy

Well, obviously, email, the Internet, Webpages, our own Webpage to promote certain things, the Internet to do research for our releases. I've often used it to check if titles are correct, or background on the people I interview. Email is good for communication with other people we communicate with on campus. We use PDF files for graphics.

Researcher

What about from a media relations standpoint?

Roy

I do most of my pitching through email. It's how we send out our releases. I research reporters too. I'll find contact information for media that way. I do research for coverage we've gotten all

the time. You know, something like Google Alerts. It's a simple thing, but you can put in (unnamed low-tech organization) professor, or (unnamed low-tech organization) research, and you get emails about what's out there, where we are in the news. Ah, what else? ... We have used video technology to do video news releases before. I think those are the ones that we really make good use of.

Researcher

You don't use a PDA, do you?

Roy

No, I wish I had one. I use a digital recorder so I can download interviews to my computer.

Researcher

Are there technologies that you're not using that you think other practitioners are using, or other reporters are using?

Roy

I don't think that they are using anything that we're not, but I think that there are things that we could be using that we're not. I wish we could use streaming video for press conferences and put it on the Web. You know, we had that press conference last week and reporters from around the state can't come, but if we sent them an email saying that they can check out the Web site for live streaming video to learn about what this is all about, then they can see our press conference. I think we'd get better state coverage. These small papers can't send their reporters everywhere. Things like podcasts I think could be used for recruiting purposes. This could have helped

nationally during the hurricane crisis. You know, they're looking for messages from (unnamed low-tech organization) and we could've given it to them live and in real time. People could download the podcasts and get the info. So yeah, I think there are technologies that we could be using that we are not.

Researcher

Do you think anybody was doing that?

Roy

I doubt it. In terms of universities, at least. I'm sure there are people doing it in other sectors of PR and marketing, but I'm not sure universities are. That's why I think we should. Because I do think reporters are up on technology. And they would have no problem making use of something like that. There are certain things that I wish we could do with the storage of press releases online with databases of press releases and some of the graphics and things. We are improving the (unnamed low-tech organization) Wire email thing.

Researcher

The email newsletter?

Roy

Yeah, we used technology in that sense. We did an online survey for (unnamed low-tech organization) Wire.

Researcher

What was your goal for the survey? What were you looking to answer?

Roy

Well, I wanted to improve the product. I wanted to see what the readers thought.

Researcher

What did you find out? Can it be improved or is it working out great?

Roy

A little of both. We got a pretty good response. 1400 people out of 5000-6000 subscribers. Everything was pretty clear. They liked the basic format. They liked the day of the week, and that sort of thing. But they wanted to see more graphics, longer descriptions, just little changes. It was good to see that they liked it in general and they had good suggestions. And we got information on who was subscribing. We asked questions on what their background was.

Researcher

So what is preventing you from using the technologies that you don't use?

Roy

Probably technological capabilities at this point, you know. But we're improving things. We have a new I.T. director who may be able to help. Since I don't directly handle technology, I can't discuss future plans. I know you have to make the suggestion, and people have to buy into

it. Then you have to make it happen. There may be expenses involved. I don't know, at this point.

Researcher

So for you, it's not necessarily cost. There may be a cost involved, but it's just policy.

Roy

Yeah. It's the bureaucracy of making things happen. I can't directly do these things.

Researcher

Have you ever asked for any kind of technology before, or gone through any procedure to say, "Hey we need this."?

Roy

Yeah. To do the (unnamed low-tech organization) Wire we had to ask. We had to figure out how computing services could do it, how we could get it done. Then I wanted to do the survey online, so we had to have that set up. The survey went smoother because it's a little easier now once we got it set up to make those things happen.

Researcher

Do you know if anyone in your department ever got denied technology through requests?

Roy

I would say, for a long time I wanted a better format for archives of our news releases. You know, when we post our releases online. Having come from a reporter background, I used to always search Websites and find information. It's always a pain when you find a Website that is difficult to navigate. And I think our database for news releases is difficult to navigate. And that still hasn't happened, but I've heard rumblings that we are going to make that change.

Researcher

So tell me about any innovators that you might know.

Roy

I don't know that I know anyone that truly fits the definition of innovator. I would say that the closest thing I've ever come to that was when I worked at the Business Report years ago. The guy that does their Daily Report, the online, Mukul Verma. He's a guy who likes technology a lot. He was into it and I think he's an innovator in a sense in that he came up with the Daily Report. He created that idea before a lot of people were doing that sort of thing. And hanging around him, I became interested. You know, you just start keeping up with that sort of thing too, and that's how you get involved. It's not like knowing an inventor or anything, but in a sense he did create it. He helped come up with how they would do it. He was smart about things like that and that's how it happened. I would do the Daily Report sometimes. And then I went to work at a Website, a Web company in Atlanta. So I was around technology all the time. And we were covering technology, so I just happened to be kind of immersed in it.

Researcher

So you were working as a reporter at the tech company?

Roy

Yeah. What it was was a Website that reported on the technology industry. It was strictly online. They were all over the country. It was based in Miami. They had offices in Atlanta and reporters on the East coast and in different cities covering the technology businesses there, and on the West coast. We had a magazine based out of Atlanta called Digital South. So we covered technology and we were a tech company in our own right. So I just happened to be keeping up with everything that was going on because of that.

Researcher

So I guess that environment was different than the environment that you work in now. When you were closer to the pulse of what's new, did you find that then you found out about new products earlier?

Roy

Yeah. Yeah definitely. Probably because when you become interested you kind of try to stay on top of things. I think it's easier if you're covering breaking news every day that relates to technology. Or if you're always hearing about something new. It's a little harder now.

Researcher

Harder to do what? Keep up with what's new in the marketplace?

Roy

Yeah, I'd say so. I certainly can still look around, but it used to be coming right to me. Here's the latest product. Here's the latest this or that. Now I just have to do it on my own time. But I think those experiences carried over. I brought the idea for (unnamed low-tech organization) Wire from those experiences. Daily Report was doing it, so (unnamed low-tech organization) should do it. And that's what we did at the Website each day. You'd go in, you'd break some story, you'd write some stories, get the latest news and then you'd send it out on email to all the subscribers to say, come check out the latest news, it's up.

Researcher

So it wasn't like an email newspaper, it was more like an invitation to look at the Website.

Roy

Yeah. Once a day they sent those out, but the site was being updated all day long. The stories of the day were sent out on the email as headlines.

Researcher

So you would do interviews, like phone interviews with people who were working at local companies?

Roy

I'd do phone interviews, I'd go out and most of the day was spent with my little laptop in our offices, making phone calls and writing stories. And you know, with technology we'd get in

touch with the people using the innovative stuff. So your editor would get in touch with you and ...

Researcher

And this was like four years ago? Or three years ago?

Roy

It was around 2000.

Researcher

So five years ago, this company was more innovative than the company that you work for now?

Roy

Yeah, pretty much. But I'd expect it to be that way. I was working for a technology company.

In higher ed we're a little stodgier, a little slower to adopt. It's just a different environment.

Researcher

Um hmm. Whenever you were interviewing people about technology products, did they ever show you how to use new things and get you excited about using something new?

Roy

Yeah. It was kind of cool to know about all the latest stuff and see examples of that sort of thing.

Researcher

Did you ever see a communication gap or have difficulty understanding the people you interviewed?

Roy

Yeah, they often talked in very high-tech terms, but they usually had good PR people that would help them, and they tried to focus on how it would be used to benefit people. But of course a lot of people had trouble with that, and that's why they went out of business. That was the problem with working there as a whole. We started covering companies going out of business. That became like the last period that I worked there. It was all about covering how many people got laid off at a technology firm, or this one going under, or losing funding. There were a lot of people coming out with innovations that either they couldn't communicate widely enough, or they didn't adequately do their market research, or whatever. Or they weren't able to turn a profit soon enough. They spent a lot of money on creating the stuff, but people ran out of patience with them before they found a good market. It started back in the day when Websites were all the rage, but no one had really figured out how to make money off of them.

Researcher

Were they doing any advertising online?

Roy

They did do some advertising, but this was back in the day when they were trying to figure out if this was the way to do it, and could you make it profitable just on Web ads. They were trying to do all these partnership deals. That takes a lot of time. People were working on that stuff

forever, and in the meantime, you don't have money coming in. So it's a question of how are you going to do it, how are you going to make the money?

Researcher

It's a tough situation.

Roy

And that was happening with all these Websites. It was amazing. Because there were tons of magazines about the Web, you know. And all this media. When I lived there there was this thing called Webvan. It was a service where you could order groceries and food and product, just by ordering it up online. That's how we'd get our snacks for the office. Someone would say, hey we need this, and Webvan would show up and deliver cokes, and cookies and chips or whatever. We were living the dream. The technology dream. But then Webvan went out of business because people would rather get their own products at the grocery store. But then it was an idea. People thought of it. They had it. I think they just didn't do enough market research to see whether people would use it.

Researcher

Do you see innovators as opinion leaders, or would another practitioner be more likely to drive the opinions of a PR practitioner like yourself?

Roy

I think my views on that have changed. You see, originally I would've said that innovators would be more likely to convince someone because they are enthusiastic and creative and

everyone gets excited about it, plus, I guess having a little experience under my belt it's more likely that people want to see someone using it. I'd want to see whether it would be useful to me. I guess it's a combination. It might have to do with the type of innovator, and then I'd like to see someone using it along the lines of my profession. You know, like with email newsletters or something. I just saw a lot of people doing it. And you think about it and you say, well, I read my email every day. It's a good way to get information. So like the creator of the first email newsletter knew that it was a good idea. But it wasn't until news outlets started doing it that I thought about using one.

Researcher

So you would say that it is easier to be convinced by someone closer to your field?

Roy

Yes.

Researcher

Do you think that PR people who work in high-tech environments have it better career wise than PR people in low-tech environments?

Roy

They probably have more fun. There were so many people doing PR at that time, I think it was like the fun business to be in. It was all new and exciting. I guess you could bring what you used to another company, like if you left and went to Coca Cola or something. If you leave a technology company you bring that knowledge with you.

Researcher

Do you think that people working in high-tech environments have better roles, or more power than other PR people?

Roy

I think if you're looking for a job at Apple or something, it definitely gives you a leg up, since you'll have a background in technology. They'll be looking for someone who knows that, and you need to know it. But even at Coke or something I think it can give you a leg up and serve as an advantage. If the person making the hire likes technology, or even if they don't know anything about it, they probably want someone who does. So I think yes, it gives you power. But unfortunately I think in a lot of environments people don't get it, or think it's important. But if you look at our office, I think that Leslie had an advantage when Raymond came in because of her Web skills.

Researcher

Yeah.

Roy

He wanted to use the Web a lot. So I think that worked for her advantage.

Researcher

And you think she got the promotion because of that?

Roy

I mean, I don't know, I like her, too. Don't get me wrong, but I think that had something to do with it. I think that he was all excited about the Web and stuff, and she was in charge of that area. He wanted to restructure things and I think it had everything to do with it. I think that's probably something that worked to her advantage.

Researcher

Do you think that happens a lot in other companies? Where someone with more innovative skills would get promoted faster?

Roy

I think it could. I think that example had everything to do with a guy who wanted a certain thing. He had ideas for the department and he thought the Web was going to be key to that. He saw that she was the one with the knowledge in that area. It was because he had an infatuation with a particular type of technology. If you look at Ed and Jim, you've got two guys with a lot of experience up for the job, but with Raymond being a TV guy, he wanted to use that technology for advertising and all the focus gravitated to TV. So Ed is the person that he chooses. Again, it's nothing against any of these people, but it's an advantage because it's the technology that the guy in charge likes. So you've got a guy who likes Web and he likes TV, so the people with that experience and that knowledge in those technologies ended up in leadership positions. It's a concrete example of people who had specific experience with technologies that he wanted to make use of, so they get the better roles.

Researcher

Do you think that gender has an effect on who will adopt first?

Roy

I don't think I have enough experience to say. I mean, you might tend to think that guys tend to like toys a bit more likely to jump into something (laughing) before it proves to be that useful.

Women may adopt when they know it's something that they'll likely benefit from using. But like Leslie is our Webmaster, and she's a woman. She's much more savvy than me.

Researcher

What about age? Is age an issue?

Roy

Yeah. Even older people who understand the basics of it, sometimes they don't know anything about it. Like my dad. He's just using email now. He's at a point that I was 10 years ago. I think Raymond likes technology, but I don't think he's that knowledgeable about it. He just knows that he likes this look. And again, I don't think he's the one who's going to come up with podcasting or streaming video. He's not going to come up with that. I think he thinks of himself as being really cutting edge, but he's really not.

Researcher

What about socioeconomics like urbanization, education, travel, and economic well-being? Do you think these effect whether people will adopt?

Roy

Yeah. It affects me. I still don't have an iPod. I keep wondering, what month am I going to budget for that? I'd probably have a hell of a lot more technology if I made more money at my job. So I think that definitely affects people. If you're not familiar with it at home, then you don't have it so you're not using it for work. Like for me, some people may think that I'm ahead of the curve for thinking about podcasting, but people who already have it are really ahead of the curve, when I was still trying to find out what podcasting is. So I think in that respect, if I had more money, then I'd have an iPod, then I'd have more job ideas.

Researcher

Yeah. So (laughing) the bigger your salary, the bigger your salary will be because of your cool job ideas?

Roy

Um hmm.

Researcher

What about personality characteristics? Do you think that there are people who are born with personality characteristics that make them more quick to accept technology?

Roy

Probably. I have friends of mine who really don't put much thought into technology on a daily basis. You know, they use email, but they don't go around thinking about what the latest

technologies are. A lot of people do like to keep up with it though. They like the new things and they make it a priority.

Researcher

How would technology make you a better practitioner?

Roy

Well I just think it would be something to make us more efficient and effective at delivering our messages. You know, getting the word out. You know, communicating. I definitely think that if we could harness technology to somehow communicate better with people throughout the state we could deliver messages to them.

Researcher

Do you think that it could make you a better manager?

Roy

Yeah. It's not that because I have this technology I am able to manage you better, but I think understanding it makes you a better manager. I think how you use it and implement it might help. Having the technology doesn't do it automatically, but it can help in the way that you manage. We may be able to do certain things that makes it more organized, or communicate with the department better.

Researcher

You mentioned research earlier. How does technology help you with research?

Roy

Well, it's research of all kinds. Like I said, as a reporter, all I did was research. All I did was surf online all day finding things. Information, phone numbers, the latest news. You're always looking for information. And if you're talking about more traditional types of research you can look for it right there without going to the library. You can look it all up online. I think technology has become research. It's about data gathering.

Researcher

What about creativity? As a writer, do you feel like technology helps you to be more creative?

Roy

I think it can inspire creativity. What I mean by that is, in my field when you're a creative person you're always looking for creative new ways to get messages to people or to reach an audience. Well the existence of a technology or knowledge of a new thing can inspire you to come up with a new idea, a new way to utilize that to do what you do.

Researcher

What about collaboration? Does technology ever help you with teamwork and collaboration?

Roy

Yes. If I'm writing a release with a professor I can just go back and forth with email. He can even be out of town and I can send out a release and get reporters in touch with him using email

or whatever. We did this when I was a reporter because we worked with reporters in other cities. All we did was communicate by instant messenger. That was a collaborative effort.

Researcher

Does it help you to speed up production?

Roy

I think it definitely does. You can do a release so much faster now. Before, you had to gather all the information, write it all down and then type it into a document. Now you can cut and paste information from online research right into it. And I can email it out quickly without copying, folding, putting it in an envelope, mailing it. That kind of slows down the speed at which you can operate and move on to the next thing.

Researcher

What about crisis communication?

Roy

I think that's an area that can be improved. When I think of crisis, I tend to think about the hurricane we just went through. You know, we lose power, and people are having trouble with technologies. I think technology can still be an answer, but which technologies, you know? Our solution during that crisis was communicating via radio. It's an older technology. It's not cutting edge technology, but it's more about finding the appropriate technology for the situation. And blogs are a good outlet for people trying to get messages out. We could post our news

releases that way. Students are reading student blogs anyway to get to know what's going on around (unnamed low-tech organization).

Researcher

As a profession, do you think PR practitioners are lagging behind the majority, or pushing forward, ahead of the majority in adopting technology? Where do we fall on the curve? This is what the chart looks like.

Roy

I think we're not setting the pace, but I think we're close behind those who are setting the pace. I think we're still late majority. Early majority would probably be people who are in the middle of the technology, people who buy technology on a regular basis. I think PR people don't start using it until they see a lot of people out there using it.

Researcher

OK

Roy

PR is all about reaching a mass audience, you know, a large audience. It's about getting messages out to most people. And if you're using a technology that reaches you know, 10 people, that's probably not very good for advertising or PR.

Researcher

Do you think they're looking at what the majority of people are using, and then deciding to use that tool?

Roy

I think they're looking at what other PR people are doing and saying, oh, I like what they are doing, or it's from their own innovative thoughts. Like with podcasting, lots of people are doing that these days. Lots of people have iPods, this is our target audience, let's try that. But PR people weren't out there doing podcasts before anybody knew what podcasts were.

Researcher

I see.

Roy

But I still think that most PR people are not doing that yet. I just went to – about a year ago, a teleconference about blogs in PR. Well people have been blogging for a couple of years now, and PR people are just now reaching that phase where they're thinking, hmm, how can we do this? How can we incorporate it? So theoretically, we're lagging behind in that area.

Researcher

Yeah.

Roy

At this point blogs are all over the place. Everybody talks about blogs on TV now, and PR is still trying to figure out, can we use that? How can we use that?

Researcher

Where do you feel that you fit on the chart? Are you with the rest of the PR group, or somewhere else?

Roy

Do you mean personally, or at work?

Researcher

At work.

Roy

I would say late majority. But I'm trying to push to be ahead of that. I think no matter what we'll end up being late majority. But that's not that bad. At least we're not laggards. You know, in a lot of ways I think I'm a laggard. Like in my personal life, I was the last person I know to buy a DVD player. When I told people that I bought it, they were like, "You didn't have a DVD player?" But I didn't have this burning need for it. I like to look at the new technology, but I don't really need it. Like with TVs. The new flat screen plasmas are nice, I like them. But I'm not going to get one. I'm more of a wishful innovator. (laughing)

Researcher

So am I missing anything? I see that you think technology is good for research, efficiency...

Roy

Technology is mostly for communication. More and more, you discover that communication is so important. And people tend to be so bad at it. But I still think we're figuring out how to best use it to communicate. I mean, everybody knows how to use a phone, but not everybody uses a Blackberry yet. It's what PR is about. Communication ties into a lot of other things like delivering messages.

Researcher

I'm hearing that as far as innovators go, you've been around innovators in different jobs.

Roy

Yeah.

Researcher

Right now you're kind of around people who are scientifically oriented, but they're not the same type...

Roy

They are innovators in different ways. The researchers are innovators, but not necessarily in technology. And not in a way that really rubs off on me all that much. I may know a little bit

more about certain obscure science topics than your average person, but not in useful ways dealing with technology.

Researcher

Is there anything that you think I'm missing, or a point that you would like to make?

Roy

I don't think so. I just hope that some of what I said is useful to you.

Researcher

Of course it's useful. This has been a big help to me.

## **Tracey Babbin Interview**

Researcher

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this interview. I'd like to tell you a little bit about my research and then I'll ask you some questions about your career.

The information I learn from you today will help me to gain a better understanding of how my research topic relates to practitioners in the field. Your answers will help me to complete my thesis research in public relations and technology. The focus of the research is to learn about what influences practitioners to use new technologies, and how these technologies affect their careers. Research has shown that practitioners have used technology to move up in their careers, and I want to dig a little deeper on that topic to find out how innovation can help our profession. I'm looking forward to hearing your input on this topic, so thank you again for agreeing to help me. Your feedback will give me valuable information for my research.

Your participation here is totally confidential and voluntary, so if you need to drop out for any reason during the interview, that is fine. Do you have any questions now?

Tracey

I'm happy to, it's a cool project.

Researcher

In this discussion we will talk about how new innovations diffuse into our work lives as PR people. I'll be looking for information on how you learn about new technologies and the interaction that you have with innovators who might share new technologies with you. The terms I'll be using in this study are very simple. I'll be talking about the term "Innovation." For

this study, we will use the term innovation in the broadest sense of the word. An innovation is any new technology or tool that helps you to do your job. When we talk about “Innovators,” we’ll be talking about your experiences interacting with those people who adopt technologies first. I’m sure you know some people who know just about everything dealing with the latest innovations, and they are very close to the pulse of what is going on with what products are new in the marketplace. These people are so close to the innovations that they sometimes invent their own versions of new technologies. You might interact directly with these individuals who stay on the cutting edge of technology, or you might only interact with these people through mutual acquaintances. This chart is called the Diffusion of innovations bell curve. We’ll be referring to it later in the interview. This is a breakdown of people in a population. It shows where the innovators and opinion leaders lie. Later on in the interview I’d like for you to place yourself somewhere on the chart as well as the PR population in general. The initial questions are fairly general. These are about innovators and innovations. What technologies are you using in your PR job, and why?

Tracey

Well, kind of the standard or really obvious ones, I guess. We use email. We use the Web a lot. We use cell phones extensively. We’re getting into using wikis and other shared spaces online like blogs. I’m into blogs personally. I blog all the time. For work we’re involved with cyberinfrastructure technology watch which has a blog. We try to blog there regularly. Also, I’ve been pushing for a year or so to use an RSS feed online. It’s not particularly cutting edge anymore but I think it would be good. I still get a lot of people asking what an RSS feed is, so maybe it’s still new to some. Those are the main technologies that we use.

Researcher

What technologies are you using that others may not be using? Why?

Tracey

RSS is probably not being used that extensively, yet. Blogs are getting out there in marketing and advertising, so probably soon they will be more popular in PR. You don't want to just latch on to a trendy technology that you have to figure out what to do with or how it will fit with your organization. Also, the Access Grid is something we use for meetings all the time. It can be really helpful. It's nice to feel like you're really meeting someone. On a conference call people take forever to keep introducing themselves in the beginning over and over as people join the call, and there are no visual cues for when someone else is going to speak. I much prefer the Access Grid. We've had events and seminars in it, and have invited the media to come in and see the events. It's harder for the media to participate since they don't usually have a node in the news room, but the media like to see how we can use these high-tech tools to communicate.

Researcher

Which technologies are widely used in the field of PR, and why?

Tracey

I'm sure email and the Web. I imagine that other people might use contact management software. We don't really do that. It's good to use to keep up with the media. We have a primitive system to track media and people we communicate with. I'd like us to have a more centralized system also for the handouts and booklets we give out. I think other people probably use that software more extensively.

Researcher

Which technologies have not been adopted or are still in the process of becoming introduced and used?

Tracey

Probably project management software. We don't really use a lot of that, but I bet some people do. Project management is still being introduced now in PR.

Researcher

Why do you think it's just starting to catch on?

Tracey

Well, it's a business tool. I think academic and nonprofit PR people don't usually have a business background. People like me who come from a journalism background don't think of those things as fast. That could be a difference. It's how familiar you are with the business methods. When you come to it more from the communications side you don't think about the numbers and evaluating your success. You think, all I have to do is write something and throw it up there.

Researcher

What factors might influence your decisions to use an innovation? Is it costs, benefits, or consequences?

Tracey

I think cost is part of it. For example, we subscribe to Bacon's media map for national contact information. It's helpful and gives us good information. I can keep my local contacts in there. We looked into that for the Terragrid, but they decided that it was too expensive, so cost does play a part in it. Also, with the RSS feed, that's free. We just have to have our programmers sit down and do the coding, so when I brought that up people had more questions about well, "what does it do," and "who's going to use it," and "what will it take to maintain." You don't want to start something that's not sustainable. I think about whether it meets our needs and how difficult or easy is it going to be to use. Is it worth the degree of time and difficulty. There are some guys at (unnamed high-tech organization) who have developed an editable Web browser. It's just like editing a word document but it's live and online. I thought about using that for our site and talked to them about downloading it. But I never got around to it to see how it works and whether it would be helpful. This is a case where there is an innovation, but I'm so locked into the day to day way of doing things. I am still using the system that we have in place.

Researcher

Tell me about the innovators that you know.

Tracey

Hmmm. I definitely feel like a lot of the techy guys I know at (unnamed high-tech organization) are innovators. It breeds a certain laziness in me because I can rely on them to know the newest and coolest thing in technology, computers, cell phones. Then sometimes it's like they are speaking a different language and they'll just bottom line it for me. They tell me what I need and I trust them completely.

Researcher

How can you tell if someone is an innovator?

Tracey

When people start talking about things that you don't understand, you think, this must be something new and innovative. This must be something high-tech. This is something I've never heard of before. You mentioned the curve and I was doing a story on software developers who were working with a Japanese company who was identifying opportunities in the market. They were talking about cell phone cameras and the opportunities in the marketplace. I love the access grid, but I just don't want a camera in my cell phone. Digital cameras in general are a good example too. We used to use a professional photographer. We have more opportunities and less cost now with the digital cameras.

Researcher

Tell me about the interaction that you have with innovators. Is it really informal or do you talk to them at meetings?

Tracey

It's really informal. There are a couple of guys in our public affairs group who are really innovative. They will be huddled around a computer looking at some new "blah blah gizmo" and I'll say, "this looks really neat, what is that?" Or I'll go and ask them if I want to purchase something. I've been thinking about getting a digital camera. The first thing I would do for something like that would absolutely be to ask them. I would ask Sean, he is very thorough, he

evaluates things that he knows. I asked him when I bought my car too! Or like yesterday, I get so tired of lugging around my heavy laptop. I noticed one of the guys had a really portable tiny one and I know that's just what I need. So of course he said, "you can get them reconditioned for only \$800 at so and so Website." So I want the link to that right away. So it's just kind of you have to notice things like that and some is very informal so as you bump into people you have to ask. I work with techy guys, so they talk about techy stuff.

Researcher

What if someone who was closer to your field of study like another practitioner, introduced an innovation to you? Would you be more likely to consider using the new innovation if it were introduced to you by someone who is not an innovator? And why do you think that is?

Tracey

If I talked to some other PR people and they said. We have been using the gizmo 3000 and you should try it out. I think I would ask some questions about it and learn what it was, but I would still go back to the office and ask Steve if he had heard of the gizmo 3000. Because I wouldn't necessarily believe that someone like me who does the kind of job that I do really would know what's good and what's not. It's sort of backwards in a way. I don't need someone who speaks my language, because I think that when you don't understand the person sometimes has more authority. These people have a proven track record with me. They fix my computer when it's broken, I would get their seal of approval before I bought anything really techy.

Researcher

Very interesting. Now we're going to talk about public relations practitioners as adopters. Do you think that PR people who work in extremely high-tech environments are affected by their organization? How do you think their close proximity to innovators affects their careers?

Tracey

Well, if I didn't work at (unnamed high-tech organization) , I wouldn't know what Access Grid was. I wouldn't think of using video conferencing to help me with my job. I wouldn't know about documents that can be editable by a whole group of people. The guy who is head of all of operations now used to be in my position. He used to do media relations, then he was the head of public affairs, and now he's over the whole thing. I wonder if that was a factor. Knowing the jargon and terminology could've made him more successful. There's an importance placed on PR at (unnamed high-tech organization) . It's seen as a key part of the organization. If I were to move to another company I might be able to tell them that they need an online database, or that they need to use video conferencing or something like that.

Researcher

Tell me about the personality characteristics of PR people who adopt earlier than others?

Tracey

I think personality absolutely has an effect. It's got a lot to do with the experiences people have growing up. I have always liked science and I've always done well at that. I used to love coding and html. I mean back when we learned Basic. I have friends who definitely have the personalities of early adopters. This one friend is always the first to get a new technology, and it

was always that way growing up. His family had the first VCR, like when VCR's were ridiculously expensive. They had the first DVD player back when there were only like 5 DVDs that you could watch.

Researcher

How does age affect technology adoption?

Tracey

I think younger people adopt earlier. If you grow up with something, it's much easier to catch on to a technology. I was that way with cell phones. I was one of the first people to get rid of my land line. When I called to disconnect it, the guy said that only about 3% of people were doing that. I was just moving around so much for a few years and it didn't make any sense to have all those service charges when I had a perfectly good cell phone. I love cell phones, so in that case I adopted right away.

Researcher

What about gender?

Tracey

I find that guys seem a lot more inclined to adopt, but that's probably changing a lot. With cell phones and camera phones for instance. So many people have those. It's hard to find a phone without a camera on it these days. I never wanted one of those. I also have had a big resistance to PDAs for some reason. I think the ubiquity of WiFi has changed things a lot. I carry a heavy laptop computer everywhere because of wireless. I take it to meetings more, I take it home

sometimes. And with cell phones I can be reachable at events. With my online journal account I can see my to-do list. It's a handy tool and it's easier than a PDA because it's on the Web.

Researcher

Does the adopter's socioeconomic situation affect their choice? (education, urbanization, travel, industrialization, economic well being, health conditions)?

Tracey

I think it does. These things just cost more money, and people with more disposable income have more technology at their disposal.

Researcher

More detailed questions are more specific

(About effects of technology & innovations)

How does technology affect your career? (If no response, prompt with roles, salaries, power.)

Tracey

It absolutely does affect my career. I think email and the Internet are so ubiquitous than ever.

Email is probably not even an innovation anymore. There are so many things that I use it for, I can't even imagine what I would do without it. Now with wikis, I think that will be the new replacement for email. Things that you use email for with sharing versions of documents and sending files, all that is so much easier now that we have version control. At one time I was using Source Share, and that was a great product. I just think it makes things so much easier.

Researcher

How does technology make you a better practitioner?

Tracey

If I hadn't worked with these techy guys I wouldn't know anything about this self editing Web browser. It's so easy. You don't have to know any html, or even how to use these Web design programs. It's just like editing a word document, in real time. The changes are made right there.

Researcher

How does technology make you a better manager?

Tracey

I think technology does a lot to help me to be a better manager because we do a lot of things online. We do performance reviews online, and you can see what your goals were from your last review. We also do project tracking online and we can see when milestones are met. It's a big benefit. I haven't used much project management software, though. My project management tool is my big white board in my office with all my notes on it. (laughing) not very high-tech!

Researcher

How does technology help you communicate with publics?

Tracey

Our Website is our primary communication with the outside world. That's our front door. And people know that it's there. It's the way we send press releases now. Only through email, there are no phone calls except for the small pitches for media relations.

Researcher

How does technology make you more collaborative?

Tracey

It makes it much easier to share documents, or to proof read. I wouldn't want to do these things without the Web. It enables you to do lots of projects.

Researcher

How does technology help you with research?

Tracey

The Web is the primary way to do research. If I'm going to do a story on someone, the first thing I do is look up their Website.

Researcher

How does technology make you more creative?

Tracey

I have a hard time with my hands. I think it's carpal tunnel or something, but I have a bad handwriting and I can't draw. I don't think of myself as artistic at all. - but I can use Quark or Illustrator to do graphic design. It makes me more creative in that way. I never would've thought that I could do that stuff, but when I worked for the newspaper I always had to make edits and changes to the graphic designer's work, so I figured if I learned this software it would help me with my job. Also, money can sometimes be a barrier. I think that's one difference with people like me. I work for an organization that's going to be more willing to allocate funds. If there's some new software available, they will be more likely to get it than if I worked at an art museum, for example. I think it's because they respect the technology. They appreciate the innovation, so they will always be more likely to support spending money on it.

Researcher

How does technology make you more effective at crisis communications?

Tracey

(Laughing) Oh boy, well we had a big deal a few years ago, I don't know if you remember, but it was with people hacking on the teragrid. It was awful because of course I wasn't getting information, so I had nothing and saying "I can't comment" always makes it look like you're up to something. Anyway, we had all these reporters calling constantly and I had to keep Googling them. You know how people will Google someone before they go on a date? Well I was Googling these reporters while I was on the phone with them. So before I would let them talk to a researcher I wanted to make sure they weren't some conspiracy theorist who was out to get us.

This one guy was so rude on the phone and I was scanning his stories, and they were all with these weird undertones. I figured it wouldn't hurt us to turn him down.

Researcher

How does technology make you better at issues management?

What about the PR profession in general? Are we leading the way, or lagging behind the majority? (Show chart Where do you think we fall on the chart? Are we early adopters, early majority, majority, or late majority?)

For one on one interviews only

In general, are you someone who adopts technology early or late? Where do you think you fall on the chart?

Researcher

I think I fall in the early majority or late majority category. With TIVO for example, I was a very late adopter,

Tracey

I think PR people are more early adopters and early majority. I think they don't have that drawback to say no to things. Since I was a journalist I always find myself saying "Nobody is ever going to print that," or "that's not a newsworthy story, I would've never covered that." I think the general PR population is more open minded than that. We have all these opportunities with multimedia now and we have an opportunity to get the message out even without the media. Through the Web we even do video presentations and interactive flash presentations. It helps me

to get to be a little more creative in our little niche area of PR. We're a very small group of people.

Researcher

Did I miss anything?

Tracey

Well, not really. I guess I just think it's interesting that I got put into this mold of being the PR person who knows about technology topics. I never looked for that, but coming from a journalism background, I just got labeled as the one who would write about high-tech stuff.

That's how I ended up here at (unnamed high-tech organization) . I find it funny how I ended up where I did.

## VITA

Jennifer Hughes is the Public Affairs Manager for LSU's National Center for Biomedical Research & Training, or NCBRT. She has been working in public affairs for the university since February of 2003. From 2003 to 2005 she worked as public relations manager for LSU's Center for Computation and Technology, a high performance computing center that is internationally recognized for its high-tech simulations and computer modeling capabilities. It was while working in this environment that Jennifer was inspired to study the effects of diffusion of innovations on public relations practitioners.

Jennifer received her bachelor's degree in mass communication from LSU in 1998, and will complete her master of arts in liberal arts degree in May of 2006. Her research interests are in public relations and technology. In 2004 Jennifer earned the professional certification of APR, or Accredited in Public Relations. She is an active member of the Public Relations Association of Louisiana. Jennifer's professional interests lie in strategic planning and media relations. Her personal interests are in photography and illustration.