MARKETING

Crossing the Chasm

by Geoffrey A. Moore

Why great new products die between excited early fans and the careful mass market - and how to cross.

BEST POINTS FROM THE BOOK

01 **Every new technology is bought by five groups in order - and each one buys for a different reason.**

Technology enthusiasts, visionaries, pragmatists, conservatives, and skeptics. The pitch that wins one group can stall with the next.

02 **Between visionaries and pragmatists there is a chasm - and most products die in it.**

Pragmatists, the early majority, will not buy without references from other pragmatists, but visionary fans do not count as proof. That catch-22 is the chasm.

03 **Visionaries and pragmatists want opposite things.**

Visionaries buy a breakthrough and tolerate bugs. Pragmatists buy a safe, proven improvement from an established company - and want no surprises.

04 **Cross like D-Day: take one small beachhead, not the whole market.**

Concentrate everything on one niche with a funded buyer, a compelling reason to buy, and no entrenched rival. One segment, won completely, beats a thin push everywhere.

05 **Pragmatists buy the whole product, not your product.**

They need the complete solution - integrations, training, support, partners - ready on day one. Visionaries will assemble the missing pieces themselves; pragmatists never will.

06 **Pragmatists trust only their own kind.**

They take references from peers in their own industry and buy from the market leader. Win a few advocates inside one niche and word of mouth does the selling.

07 **Position against the alternative buyers already pay for.**

Use Moore's two-sentence formula: for these buyers, dissatisfied with the market alternative, our product is the category that delivers the compelling benefit - unlike the product alternative, we have assembled the whole product.

08 **When crossing, distribution comes before revenue.**

The number-one objective is a sales channel pragmatists already trust. Price like the market leader and pay the channel generous margins until you are across.

09 **Expand pin by pin through the bowling alley.**

Use the beachhead to win the neighboring niche, then the next. Each win supplies references and cash that make the next pin easier to knock down.

10 **Bowling-alley wins can ignite a tornado - then Main Street changes the game again.**

In the tornado, whole markets adopt at once and demand explodes. On Main Street, growth settles and buyers pay for ease, service, and the total experience instead of novelty.

11 **After the crossing, the company itself has to change.**

The pioneers who won the early market keep making custom promises that drain the mainstream business. Settlers, who build repeatable operations, have to take over.

THE BOOK, IN SHORT

The big idea: technology products are adopted in a fixed order, described by Moore's Technology Adoption Life Cycle. Innovators (technology enthusiasts) come first, then early adopters (visionaries), then the early majority (pragmatists), the late majority (conservatives), and finally laggards (skeptics).

The standard marketing model treats this curve as a smooth ramp, where each group hands the next one its endorsement. Moore says that is an illusion: there are cracks between every group, and between visionaries and pragmatists the crack is a chasm. The two groups buy for opposite reasons - visionaries want a breakthrough and forgive rough edges, while pragmatists want proven, low-risk improvement and references from people exactly like them. Visionary praise does not persuade pragmatists, yet pragmatists will not move without references - so products stall and companies burn their cash in the gap. Segway and Motorola's Iridium satellite phone are his famous casualties.

His way across is the D-Day analogy. Like the Allies at Normandy, you do not attack everywhere at once: you land overwhelming force on one narrow beachhead - a single niche segment whose buyers have a compelling, urgent reason to buy - and you commit to that one segment only. Documentum, his case study, ignored the whole document-management market and targeted regulatory affairs departments at big pharmaceutical firms, a niche of roughly forty organizations. Within a year, thirty of the top forty had committed.

Winning the beachhead takes an invasion force and a defined battle. You must deliver the whole product - everything the pragmatist needs for a complete, working solution, assembled with partners and allies, not just the core item in the box. You position against a market alternative (the established way whose budget you are after) and a product alternative (a similar innovator you must

beat), claim leadership in the niche, and launch through a distribution channel pragmatists already trust, priced like a market leader.

From the beachhead, expansion follows the bowling alley: each conquered niche knocks into an adjacent one - Documentum rolled from pharmaceuticals into chemicals, oil refineries, and financial services - until adoption can ignite a tornado of mass demand and later settle onto Main Street. Moore closes with a warning: markets grow in a staircase, not a hockey stick, and the pioneers who won the early market often become liabilities afterward. Crossing the chasm means changing the company as much as the marketing.

DO THIS WEEK

Do this with one product this week: (1) Name your smallest winnable beachhead - one specific group of buyers, not an industry - and check it against Moore's showstoppers: an identifiable buyer with budget, a compelling reason to buy now, a whole product you can actually deliver, and no entrenched competitor. (2) List everything that group needs beyond your core product - setup, integrations, training, support - and who could supply each piece. (3) Name the first four or five customers inside that niche whose success would become your reference base. If you cannot fill in all three, you have found your chasm homework.

By Geoffrey A. Moore, first published 1991; the 2014 third edition updates the examples for the digital era. Read it if early fans love your product but the big market will not bite yet.