Change Adoption in the Digital World

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Whitepaper

Abstract

A traditional Adoption Curve has long been utilized by practitioners to map different stages of attitude towards change. However, in a digital transformation scenario, users and stakeholders may be faced with an accelerated adoption curve. Specific interventions at each stage of the curve are required to make the transformation initiative successful. This paper proposes one possible accelerated adoption curve and explores related interventions that can help with the transformation.

Change Adoption

There is no better time to talk about Change Adoption. Implementing a change normally takes users through a guided thought process of change in attitudes through collaboration, highlighting benefits and interests, communication and training. While many organizations can work through these defined plans and strategies, digital transformation has made it imperative to drive change in an accelerated manner. Understanding this new accelerated adoption curve is the key to driving, managing and sustaining change in the long run.

The Standard User Adoption Curve

In a typical change scenario, users initially respond to changes with denial, followed by frustration and gradual acceptance, following a period of experimentation. The standard change curve (mapped by Kubler- Ross)* has been used to showcase the phases of change adoption that a user goes through. The curve is represented below:

Fig 1: The Kubler-Ross Change Curve
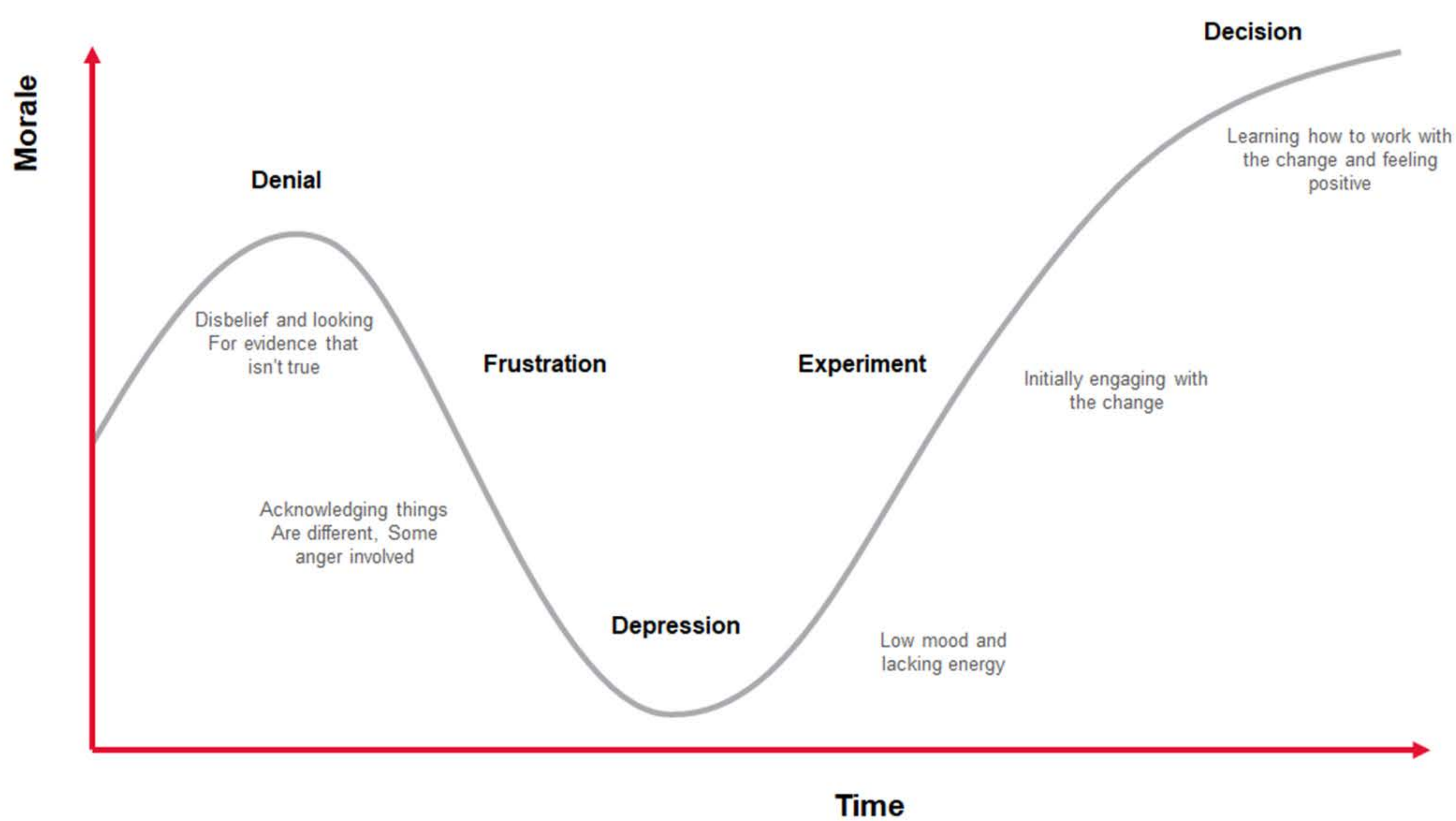
The curve, also referred to as the "Stages of Grief", represents the gamut of feelings and emotions that individuals go through as they adapt to a transformation at work or in life. These individual emotions incrementally enable teams, organizations and an ecosystem to adapt to a new way of work.

However, in the new normal, it is imperative for an organization to adopt a digital transformation. Leaders are increasingly faced with a largely invisible challenge – The organization needs to adapt at an incremental speed, with phases that may be shorter on the curve or a forced incline, due to the rapidly evolving ecosystem. This warrants a change in the Individual adoption curves across the organization.

The Proposed Curve

A likely Individual Change adoption curve should therefore account for shorter time durations between phases and have a steep upward curve in order to match the accelerated learning curve of the organization. This new curve leaves little scope for the "frustration" or "depression" stages. Often, given a digital transformation, there is no alternative but to adapt to a new way of work.

Based on our work with organizations around the world, a possible Individual change curve could look like the representation below:

Fig 2: Modified Curve due to Ecosystem Level Transformation
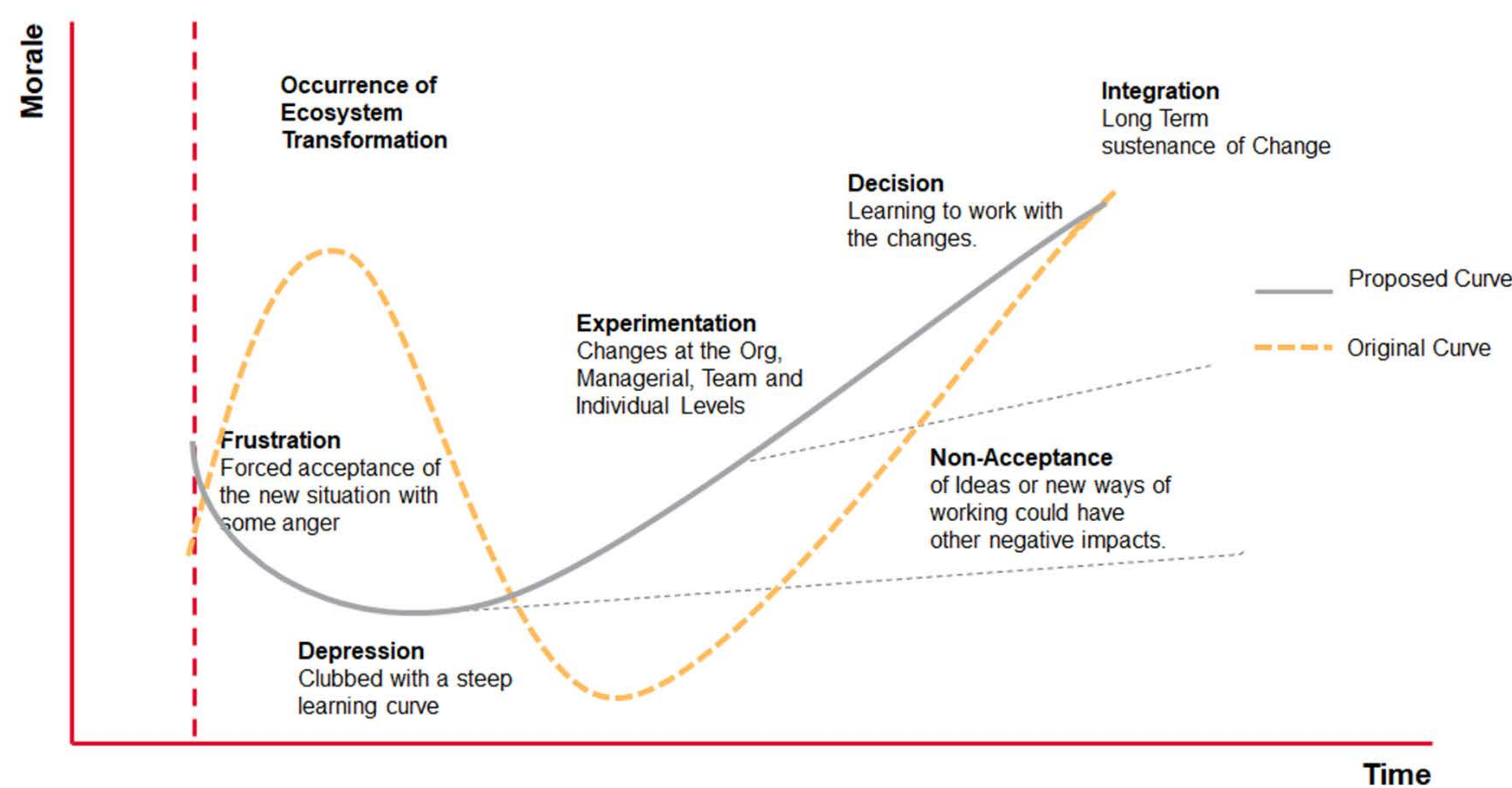
The above curve indicates some critical differences from the standard curve:

1. The phases of frustration and depression could be much shorter. This is due to the fact that digital transformations "have to be" accepted rapidly than a standard or a planned transition. Resistance to these may also be a lot lower due to understanding the need for immediacy of response or an inherent acceptance of the situation.

2. The learning curve may be steeper due to responses being unplanned or untested.

3. The Experimentation stage will be much longer and several solutions or responses may be discarded. This is because the organization itself may be in the learning phase for such ecosystem level changes.

4. The Decision stage may be iterative and WILL rely on speed and critical judgement at the leadership level, which will then trickle down to the individual level.

5. The Denial stage has been completely discarded. There may be no question of denial, whether at the individual or at the organizational level.

The implications for change practitioners on the three standard dimensions of Speed of Adoption, Utilization and Proficiency can then be mapped in the table below:

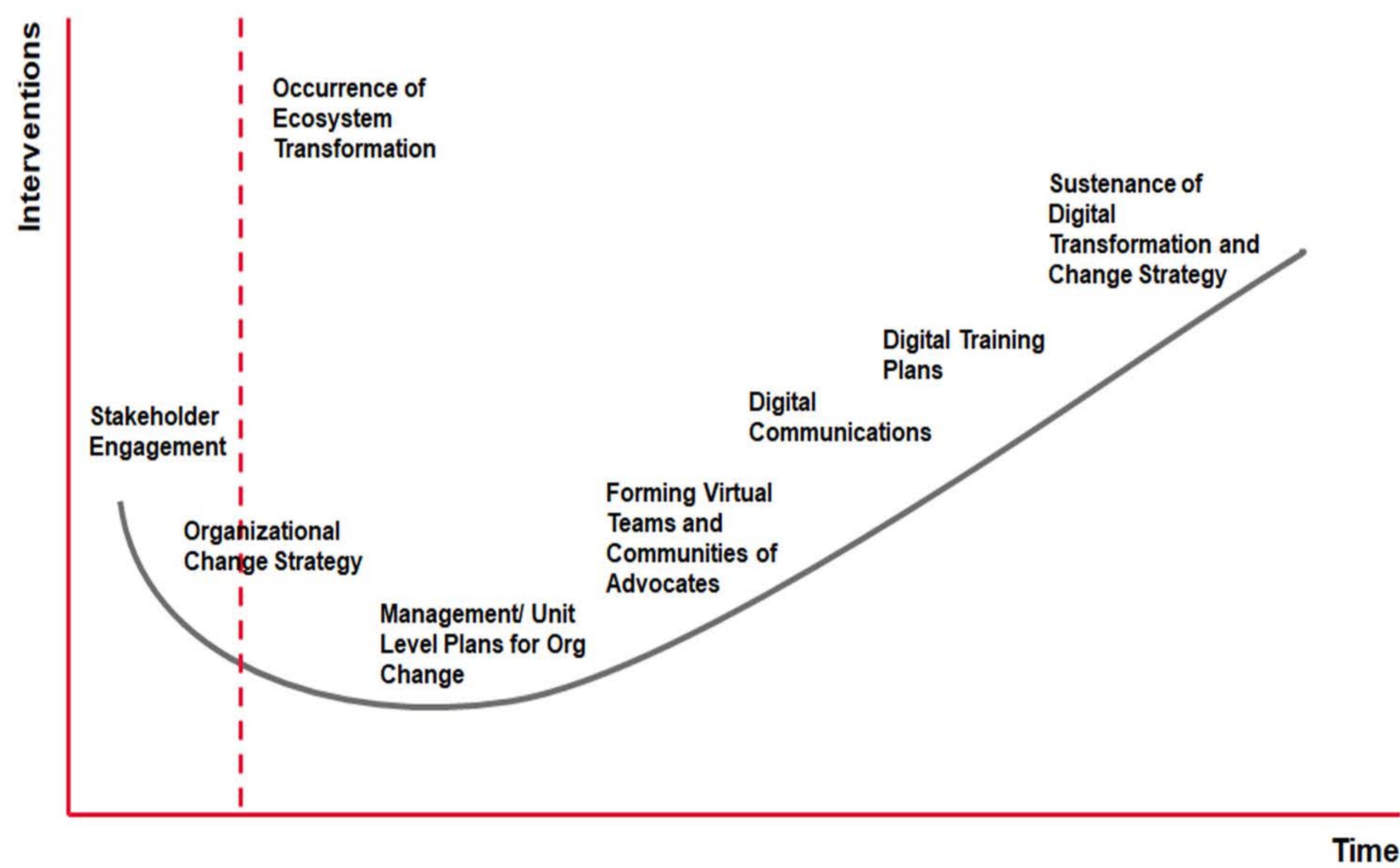| Dimension	Standard Curve	Proposed Curve	Implication
Speed of Adoption	Change adoption was planned at a slower pace. Larger transformations could take years.	Adoption of Change needs to be much faster, sometimes in a span of weeks.	The time given to implement change programs will be much shorter. The approach to change adoption must either be tweaked or accelerated to suit a faster pace. The stage of integration may not be a final stage. Practitioners must be able to iterate the change planning process to account for experimental decision making.
Utilization of the Change	Several processes required to ensure optimum utilization of the new systems.	Rapidly changing or experimental processes, often creating pressure to utilize the new system rapidly.	To achieve faster utilization, the change program has to incorporate: ● Proactive strategy planning ● On-going stakeholder engagement ● Addressing benefits, interests or WIIFM (What's In It For Me) directly ● Creating flexibility within the organization ● Rapid communication that creates knowledge and can be dispersed quickly. ● Guided training programs that reach larger audience groups at a more rapid pace. ● Transparency in strategy implementation and outcomes ● Systematic collaboration and feedback from vendors, allied partners and customers.
Proficiency of Users	Users were required to gain only minimum usage proficiency in the short run.	Users are required to have detailed knowledge of features and applications of the transformed processes.	Two main challenges for the practitioner: 1. Optimum levels of proficiency for large groups of users in a short span of time. 2. Continuous improvement to sustain levels of proficiency and enhance usage of the new processes in the long run.

Planning for Change Adoption

When digital transformations are underway, organizations need to adapt to new operating environments with a well-planned transition approach. Traditional methods used to drive change have to be modified to cater to emerging requirements. Some amount of pre-emptive planning may also be required to extend the initial part of the curve, in order to prepare for a timely response.

While instituting a digital transformation initiative seems complicated, adequate empathy and understanding of the stages of the curve can help the change become an acceptable norm. A sense of urgency and commitment to planning from the top leadership and associated business plans will also enable transition to the new way.

Based on the implications discussed above, specific Change Adoption interventions can then be mapped along the same proposed curve:

Fig 3: Interventions on the Change Curve

Employees' rate of adoption of the digital transformation helps them and their organizations to adapt to a changing ecosystem as quickly.

Dimension	Standard Curve	Interventions		
		People	**Process**	**Technology**
Pre-Transformation	Stakeholder Engagement	● Build a holistic vision for the transformation program with senior leadership. ● Engage key stakeholders at multiple levels, including business level heads to build comprehensive plans.	● Establish the right digital and social channels for quick dispersion of messages. ● Offer stakeholders necessary and guided training programs for using Digital Collaboration tools.	● Build critical links between the core and support teams including Cyber-security and Infrastructure to ensure minimal roadblocks for users.
Transformation	Creating Digital Change Advocate Networks	● Use a holistic instead of a silo approach – involve all units impacted. ● Create a team of "Digital Change Advocates" to help impacted users in their daily activities/ work streams.	● These "Digital Change Advocates" help in addressing solution gaps for the future process by having periodic touchpoints with their colleagues	● Due to rapid implementation, increased checks and review of all features are required to monitor technology changes.
Experimentation	Change Assessments	● Conduct quick "Sentiment Analysis" dipsticks instead of longer readiness assessments to check on user attitudes.	● Construct User Journey Maps across the old and new processes to identify potential roadblocks to utilization.	● Use a detailed impact Assessment to check on technology change impacts for various user groups.
Experimentation	Communication	● Focus on branding and consistency of communication ● Instead of just creating awareness, target the knowledge and desire stages to increase adoption rates.	● Utilize multiple mediums – Digital and Social media can disperse information at a much faster pace than traditional mediums such as the Intranet.	● Create virtual collaboration spaces and applications such as bots to disseminate information faster.

Dimension	Standard Curve	Interventions		
		People	**Process**	**Technology**
Experimentation and Decision Making	Training	● Use easy to understand, visual and guided training to get users trained quickly. ● Start training as early as possible. Use the journey maps to identify potential training gaps.	● Utilize multiple mediums to train users including virtual collaboration tools and spaces instead of traditional workshops.	● Technology guides and videos can be very helpful to communicate the finer nuances of the changes.

A systematic governance and periodic iteration to the Experimentation stage will help in keeping the transformation program on track. Measuring user sentiments and performing quality checks will help in sustaining the pace of the transformation curve.

Key Metrics for Success of Change Programs in a Digital Transformation Scenario

Some suggested measures of success for digital change programs include:

KPI	Parameter	Measurements	Method	Purpose
Digital OCM	Digital Org. Change Awareness + Utilization	>=95% (Online - Survey feedback or Sentiment analysis) Polled tool	Through multiple modes – Social media, Email, and other Digital Collaboration tools	● Improve Change understanding through Digital Collaboration Tools ● Maximize reach with help of Social media toolkits
Digital Change Advocates	Feedback from Change Advocates and Unit Heads	100%	All sessions of the engagement on a continuous basis.	● Driving force and backbone of the engagement.
Digital End User Skill Enhancements and Training	Online Training Utilization and User Proficiency	>= 95% participation in the program	Online Training participation, Trainee evaluation and Trainer Feedback.	Rapid utilization of the new technology

Overall, a sustained approach is required to keep the measures continuously improving and the Digital Transformation initiative moving forward.

Tech Mahindra's work in the Space

Tech Mahindra's work in the space of Digital Transformation incorporates a systematic and effective Organizational Change Management approach with a comprehensive set of customized tools and techniques. Tech M's proprietary C4 framework offers a modular and scalable change management solution, uniquely affecting the people side of change. In a virtual workspace oriented scenario, the C4 method offers several customized engagement and assessment methods to quickly ramp up transformation and build a sustainable transition initiative.

Author's Profiles

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Balasubramanian C is a PROSCI® Certified Organizational Change Practitioner and PMI® Certified Project Management Professional. He has 16+ years of experience in the field of Business Consulting, Organizational Change Management Consulting and Program & Project Management Consulting. As a Business Transformation leader, he enables and coaches clients to achieve a desired future state using the principles of Organizational Change Management. He can be contacted at BC00620234@TechMahindra.com.

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We are the Business Excellence team, Tech Mahindra's consulting unit. We help clients achieve business objectives in the digital era

- We work with clients to develop and implement digital transformation strategies that impact their products and business models

- We help our clients transform their operations and processes in line with this strategy

- We also help them build a key enabler for achieving these objectives: agility and automation in the technology function

- Our program and change management services ensure on-track implementation of the various transformation initiatives

All of these services are underpinned by proven methodologies, frameworks and tools. These are based on design thinking approaches that ensure stakeholder buy-in at each stage. Our clients find our global experience, collaborative approach, and the ownership we bring to ensure outcomes in every one of our engagements, as a key differentiator.

Contact us at befutureready@techmahindra.com
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