UNDERSTANDING

PRODUCT ADOPTION
Table of Contents

- Product Adoption
- Stages in Product Adoption
- Steps to Drive Product Adoption
- How Role-Based Training Boosts Product Adoption and User Engagement
- Product Adoption and Customer Onboarding
Product Adoption

We live in an increasingly SaaS-driven world where competing companies strive to offer innovative products at attractive prices. As the subscription model of business gains prominence across industries; you as a business owner, product manager, marketing whiz, or sales head will always look at ways to enhance product adoption. Alternatively, if you are a newbie looking to enhance your knowledge on product adoption, this e-book will serve you in good stead.

Are you ready to dive into the fascinating world of ‘Product Adoption’?

‘Product Adoption’ is a process or a series of stages during which a person is convinced about a product and begins to use it. This is one of the simplest definitions available for product adoption. In this e-book, we examine different facets of product adoption, how it can be driven, its role in fostering user-engagement, and growth of an organization.

The Importance of Product Adoption

Today’s competitive market forces organizations to innovate and create products and services that are supposed to make lives easier. With automation, AI, and robotics evolving at breakneck speed, the upcoming years will offer a unique intersection of technology and customer service across industries. Only those organizations which
which can offer the right mix of pricing, customer-friendly support, and deliver upon promised features can survive the competition and the growing demands of an increasingly aware customer-base. Organizations can only thrive if they are able to sell more of their products or service line and create satisfied customers who can then go and advocate their product. Thus, it becomes increasingly clear why organizations need to rethink their product adoption strategy and focus on creating a product and associated training that can truly deliver results and value for them and their customers.

To cite an example of how specific solutions are adopted by different industries, we examine the various applications of ‘Big Data Analytics' by different industries to address specific problems. The illustration below from ‘Forbes' shows a clear interest in the adoption of ‘Big Data Analytics’ solutions.

Fighting Competition

Have you ever had a bad experience with a software upgrade? Do you remember the mess that was Windows Vista and the problems that it created for Microsoft? Various software companies at some point of time or the other face a similar scenario wherein a new software product launch does not go as planned and the company has to firefight to save its reputation. Additionally, organizations are forced to reinvent and transform themselves to handle the competition.

Let’s look at some examples – Zendesk started as a customer service software company with a product focused on creating, logging, and tracking customer complaints. Today, Zendesk offers a suite of products that range from instant chat support, analytics, and campaign management. This transformation was not overnight. It was necessitated by the growth of a smaller firm based out of India – Zoho, which offered an entire suite of similar services at a significantly lower price. The next set of competitors have now arrived on the scene with Freshworks offering cloud-based software services, which are aggressively priced. There is no paucity of established players and startups offering software. The challenge for companies is to retain existing customers and acquire new customers.

When we look at ‘products’ that failed; one of the biggest examples of an idea that lost steam is Microsoft’s ‘Zune’ series of portable media players. A robust and feature-rich device with an ecosystem for content, Microsoft failed to gauge the needs and tastes of the public and lost the plot to Apple, iTunes, and its iPod family of media players. The last nail on the coffin for Zune was an incident that happened on December 31, 2008. Based on a bug within the software powering the older versions of the Zune player, the players were bricked. This was a collective failure of QA/Testing and the Product Design Team.

It is important to ensure that all the chinks in the product or service are ironed out before it is available for use by the public.
Stages in Product Adoption

There are five stages in the product adoption process as follows:

- **Awareness** - This is when a prospect learns about a product but would not have enough information about it.
- **Interest** - The prospect researches and tries to secure more information about the product.
- **Evaluation** - The prospect wonders if the product will be beneficial.
- **Trial** - The prospect signs up for a free trial or opts for the smallest available duration to evaluate the product.
- **Adoption / Rejection** - This is the most crucial stage that determines the success of the product. If the user finds the product a right match, then the user adopts the product. If the product fails to match the user’s expectations and needs, then the user rejects the product.

If a product well and truly wins the hearts of its users/customers, then the product users tend to recommend the product to their friends, colleagues, and family. This is known as **product advocation**. In simple terms – ‘word-of-mouth publicity’ or in today’s digitally connected world, recommendations on Twitter/Facebook/Instagram/LinkedIn.

### Models of The Adoption/Diffusion Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AIDA</strong></td>
<td><strong>Adoption Process</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hierarchy of Effects</strong></td>
<td><strong>Robertson</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rogers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Problem Recognition</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Liking</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Trial</td>
<td>Preference</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>Legitimation</td>
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<td>Adoption</td>
<td>Conviction</td>
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Steps to Drive Product Adoption

Today, with the explosion of social media and the transformation in the way we consume and react to news; it's become increasingly difficult for companies across industries to manage the reputation of their brand. We examine the challenges that organizations face to drive product adoption and the steps that companies can take to drive and accelerate product adoption.

Key Challenges

When an organization adopts a new software solution for internal use, there's a learning curve associated with it. First, there might be some resistance to it and people would ask why things are being changed. But as more people begin to use it and if there's a top-down approach in promoting use of the solution, eventually the entire organization embraces the solution. The challenges arise - when there is lack of proper documentation and training in using the product, there are no measurable benefits that can be ascribed to using the product, and if it complicates an existing seamless process.

When it comes to marketing and selling your product to others; you need to answer the following questions:

- How will your product help the user?
- What are the existing products that are like your product?
- What measurable benefits does your product offer over them?
What steps will you take to attract users to use your product?

Does your product have detailed and easy to understand user-guides?

Do you have a dedicated support team that can guide users in real-time?

Now let us examine the steps you can take to overcome these challenges in fostering product adoption?

**User Experience Matters**

This works in equal parts for software and actual physical devices. The user-experience for those who use your product or service should be friendly. Poor design and a bad user-experience are primary reasons for a product to fail. As evidenced by the continuing success of the Apple juggernaut, people are willing to pay a bigger cost for an immersive and friendly user-experience. It is important for organizations to offer an intuitive user experience to visitors to their website.

Some **stats on user experience:**

- 52% of users said that a bad mobile experience made them less likely to engage with a company.
- Mobile users are 5 times more likely to abandon a task if a site isn’t optimized for mobile.
- 70% of consumers learn about a company through their blog rather than ads.
- 79% of people who don’t like what they find on one site will go back and search for another site.

**Offer In-Product Training and Walkthroughs**

People don’t have the patience or time to read a huge ‘Help Document’ and figure out how the product works. Users need just-in-time and on-demand eLearning nuggets that help them address their queries at each stage of their user-journey. Visual walkthroughs work better than just plain text. Invest not just in designing a product but also in creating useful, engaging, and informative in-product walkthroughs.
Personalized Email Campaigns

Yes, no one likes spam. But do not discount the worth of a well-written, targeted, and personalized email campaign. Some interesting stats on email campaigns:

- Email marketing has an average ROI of 3,800 percent. For every dollar invested, the average return is $38.
- As of 2017, there are 3.7 billion global email users. This number is predicted to grow to 4.1 billion users by 2021.
- Email list segmentation and personalized emailing were the most effective email strategies of 2017.

Modern digital marketing focuses on personalization and treating each potential email address as a lead and potential customer. LinkedIn has made things easier for digital marketers by offering opportunities to reach out to relevant professionals through InMail. It is essential to do a keen study of your recipients and customize your email to them. *Email Marketing is not dead.* It has evolved with the times and still plays an integral role in acquiring customers and driving product adoption.

Amplify Content via Digital Assets

Your organization’s website, the product-specific website, and app are great places for you to market your services with intelligently placed banner images, animated clips, and in-app promotions. The ‘corporate blog’ is another oft-neglected section of websites that is rarely put to good use. Don’t just restrict yourself to articles and essays, produce engaging videos, and publish infographics that can drive traffic.

Align Training to Product Release Cycles

In addition to in-product training solutions, it is important that you create a full-fledged product training solution that stays up-to-date with each upgrade cycle of your product. If your product release cycles and product training content are not in sync; you risk losing your existing customers. It is important that you assess and examine your product training to see if its relevant and revamp it as and when required.
Leveraging Social Media

We are at a fascinating juncture in the technology space where social media plays a key role in helping brands and users connect. It is important for organizations to leverage the power of social media effectively to drive product adoption. In the past couple of years, HubSpot has used social media effectively to drive product adoption and is now one of the most trusted inbound marketing and sales platforms in the market.

Gamify Learning

According to a study, 56% of the US gaming population is under the age of 35. If such a large group of millennials prefer gaming, companies that integrate games into product training have the distinct advantage of engaging learners at the first attempt itself. Take the case of Offercraft, a cloud-based content management portal. It has embedded trivia games, interactive contests and dynamic rewards to make training fun and engaging.

Appify Training

Today’s learners want to learn in a fun and flexible environment. Delivering shorter training sessions through an app not only makes training more accessible and quick but also holds the attention of learners for a longer time. For instance, a SaaS video and voice interviewing company Montage, has created brief learning sessions that are delivered through their app. The methodology enables learners to access product training anytime, anywhere and maximizes hands-on time with the product.

Incentivize Learning and Showcase User Expertise

Incentives can turn a boring and ho-hum training into an engaging learning experience. It can give users the extra push needed to make training a priority. Leveraging clear metrics to measure the expertise and efficiency acquired through training, and showcasing it through easy to understand graphics, pie charts, and infographics makes learning fun. Deloitte Leadership Academy, for instance, has included leaderboard in its user-friendly platform to enhance user engagement for its online training program.
Creating Early Adopters through Effective Training Spells Success

A right-fit training program can make all the difference between accelerating product adoption and just trying to do so. A blended learning approach that combines games, apps, instructor-led training, videos, and eLearning modules creates a comprehensive learning experience that is highly engaging.

STEPS TO DRIVE PRODUCT ADOPTION

User Experience Matters

52% of users said that a bad mobile experience was a deterrent

Offer In-Product Training and Walkthroughs
Create useful, engaging, and informative in-product walkthroughs

Personalized Email Campaigns
Email marketing has an average ROI of 3,800%

Amplify Content via Digital Assets
Use your 'corporate blog' effectively

Align Training to Product Release Cycles
Synchronize your product training and product release cycles

Leveraging Social Media
Use your social media channels to drive product adoption

Gamify Learning
Gamifying learning improves course completion rates

Appify Training
Deliver product training nuggets through learning apps

Incentivize Learning
Incentives can turn boring training into an engaging learning experience

Create Early Adopters
Create early adopters through effective training spells success
How Role-Based Training Boosts Product Adoption and User Engagement

Most organizations today understand the significance of investing in learning and development (L&D) programs. The global spend on corporate training amounted to USD 359 billion in 2016. The global corporate training market is to grow at a CAGR of 9.79% during the period 2018-2022.

“How can we provide user-specific learning intervention – when the learner needs it – to boost product adoption and maximize user engagement?”

This is a key question, which corporate learning executives are asking today.

The answer lies in deploying ‘role-appropriate training’, which focuses on customizing training for different user groups, ranging from sales and implementation specialists to partners and end-users. Combining job roles for training purposes just because they are similar is unlikely to yield optimal outcomes.
Varying Training Based on the Product’s Intended Application

A product can have various applications within an organization. For instance, using a CRM application will involve different actions for the sales, marketing, and customer support teams – and each would need to be trained accordingly. Segmenting training content according to user types and their roles ensures that contextually-relevant content is served to train users on how to use the product, navigate its features, and measure performance, thereby ensuring optimal results.

Understanding User Behavior Patterns

How different user groups engage with a product is a key aspect that determines product adoption and success. Role-based user segmentation makes it easier to roll out new features and measure their effectiveness through controlled A/B tests. At the same time, analyzing role-based user behavior patterns collected from various data sources can be of significant help in developing meaningful and relevant product training modules.

Gathering Closed Loop Feedback for Product Enhancements

Deploying role-appropriate product training offers another big benefit – it enables user segments to provide relevant and unique feedback on product features, its user-friendliness, design, and other aspects. Feedback polls should be built into role-based training modules to create a closed-loop feedback mechanism where user feedback is used to drive product enhancements.

Making Role-Based Training Work

A deep understanding of the audiences’ roles and responsibilities is critical to the definition of appropriate areas of role-based training as well as desired outcomes. Identifying a specific action at the end of training also helps ensure user accountability for applying what they have learned. In addition to the training content, it is important to tailor the training materials and consider the best way to deliver the content – eLearning vs. classroom training – based on the nature of the audience. The right role-appropriate product training program imparts a contextual understanding of a product to different user groups, boosting user confidence, maximizing engagement and accelerating adoption.
Product Adoption and Customer Onboarding

We learnt about product adoption and steps to drive product adoption in organizations. In this section, we will examine the connection between product adoption and customer onboarding and how organizations leverage training to accelerate product adoption.

Hubspot’s new user onboarding for inbound marketing is an enormously successful program. The secret behind its success? Their ‘Inbound Certification’ course and ‘Understanding Your Hubspot Portal’ project. These learning courses help their new users realize faster value from the product, immediately identify the most relevant tools, and drive rapid product adoption. The result: faster customer onboarding and greater product success.

Enhancing Customer Onboarding with Accelerated Product Adoption

Here’s how you can improve the customer onboarding process.

Create Content that can be Easily Retained by Learners

High quality and meaningful content is the key to keeping learners engaged and motivated. Incorporate interactive learning elements and videos. For instance,
Adobe has created a free video library for users to realize value from their digital learning service. The videos can be accessed by users at their own convenience. This helps learners on two fronts. It gives them the chance to apply knowledge outside the learning environment and helps them personally relate to the training content. The outcome: better knowledge and skill retention.

Leverage eLearning Solutions to Drive Product Adoption

eLearning solutions are the most cost-effective way to train new product-users. For instance, if users are facing challenges in using certain product features, creating bite-sized learning modules that offer relevant information to address the problem can be very effective. Create real-time information nuggets to help users update their knowledge about latest product changes, enhance user efficiency, and accelerate customer onboarding.

Training across the Customer Journey

Even the best training content is sure to fail if it is not incorporated into multiple touch points across the customer journey. For quick customer onboarding, it is crucial to incorporate on-demand training programs and enable ongoing education through sources such as quizzes, exams, role plays, and simulation exercises. The programs must be made available at every step of customer journey – across mobile, web, and social media – for easy access. Continued engagement is key to rapid customer adoption. Offering integrated and interactive training programs between the two major customer milestones – when the customer first signs up for the product and when they realize their first value from the product – helps build strong relationships with customers, driving product adoption and enhancing smooth customer onboarding.

Conclusion

We hope that you found this eBook useful and now have clarity on product adoption. A key challenge for product-based companies is the ability to retain clients and increase their client-base. The rate at which the IT industry has progressed in the past decade in tandem with the growth of ‘cloud-based software solutions’ has led to increasing churn levels as clients shop for less expensive options. At Origin, we believe that eLearning has the power to help organizations drive product adoption and increase their client-base. Over the years, we have developed powerful and
engaging eLearning solutions for organizations across industries that have helped them acquire more clients. We do not restrict ourselves to product training and offer result-driven eLearning and training solutions that cover the spectrum of L&D ranging from employee on-boarding to skill development and compliance training to managed learning services.

‘Origin Fractal’ is our proprietary mobile-first learning experience platform that can help you deliver digital product training to your customers and channel partners. Please write to us at info@originlearning.com for innovative solutions that address your eLearning requirements.