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Executive Summary

Crossing the Chasm is divided into two sections. The first describes the market dynamics that create the chasm, and the second prescribes the business tactics to cross it.

The market dynamics that create the chasm are well described by the Technology Adoption Life Cycle. That framework asserts that when disruptive innovations are introduced into any community, it will self-segregate into a series of five different adoption cohorts, as follows:

- Innovators or *technology enthusiasts*
- Early adopters or *visionaries*
- The early majority or *pragmatists*
- The late majority or *conservatives*
- Laggards or *skeptics*

The first two cohorts support one another and create an early market for the disruptive innovation based on gaining competitive advantage by being a first mover. The last two cohorts support one another by staying aloof from the innovation and calling out all its many failings. The cohort in the middle, the early majority or pragmatists, has the swing vote.

Pragmatists make buying decisions by group consensus—I'll do it when I see you do it. They want their decisions confirmed by others in terms of what and when they buy and from whom. Until the market gives them clear signals on these questions, they will delay commitments. Thus the chasm is created by visionaries going early and pragmatists hanging back.

To cross the chasm, sponsors of the disruptive innovation need to do two things. First, they must target a subset of the total pragmatist population who have a compelling reason to buy in early, typically because they are saddled with a problem that cannot be solved by any conventional means. Normally these problems are segment-specific, lacking the market size to attract proper attention from the incumbent vendors. Pragmatists in these niches are talking to each other about this problem, actively looking for relief, and open to piloting unconventional solutions.

Once such a segment has been targeted, the second key tactic is to define and deliver the complete solution to that problem, or the *whole product.* Normally this involves assembling a consortium of product and service providers and orchestrating a segment-specific effort to win over the first few "pragmatists in pain." If the whole product holds up, if the problem is genuinely addressed, then the message goes out via word-of-mouth to the rest of the segment, and there is a minor stampede to jump on the new bandwagon. That influx of new business has relatively low cost of sales and high pricing margins and is, by itself, normally sufficient to make the vendor a going concern.