

How agricultural extension leads to practice change

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Categories of extension activities

Activity category	Definition
Category A: Awareness	Awareness raising events which start the initial learning pathway by seeking to engage producers with MLA's E&A programs. The primary purpose of these events are to enable information sharing and networking. Examples of Category A events include field days, seminars, conferences and expos .
Category B: KASA change	Events which build producer knowledge, skills and confidence. These events also feed participants into Category C programs. Examples of Category B events include workshops
Category C: Embedded practice change	Events which focus on skill development and supporting implementation of new skills and learnings within the farm business. These activities are delivered using a supported learning approach

Table 1: Categories of agricultural extension activities (Sherriff et al, 2016)

Types of practice change

Seven dimensions of practice change (Wilkinson, 2011)

1. Partial adoption
2. Gradual adoption
3. Stepwise adoption
4. Flexibility in use
5. Technological evolution
6. Adaptation
7. Disadoption



Desire to change

Historically

Hear about innovation → **persuaded of value** → adoption of innovation
= practice change

Reality

Hear about innovation → **desire to change** → adoption of innovation
= practice change

Desire to change driven by:

1. Proactive process
2. Reactive process

(Nicholson et al, 2003 and Turner et al, 2017)

Drivers of practice change

The desire to change is the key factor in determining the urgency that is placed on a potential adoption opportunity by the producers.

- Desire of change influenced by;
 - Financial
 - Environmental
 - Personal
- The likelihood of producer engagement in extension activities and the extent of their adoption is directly influenced by their internal motivations.

The link between practice change and increased knowledge/skills

Literature has indicated there is a direct link between practice change and knowledge and skills and that this can take one of three forms.

1. Skills and knowledge are a pre-requisite to implementing change
2. Skills and knowledge are increased through the practice change process
3. Continuous improvement of skills and knowledge promotes practice change

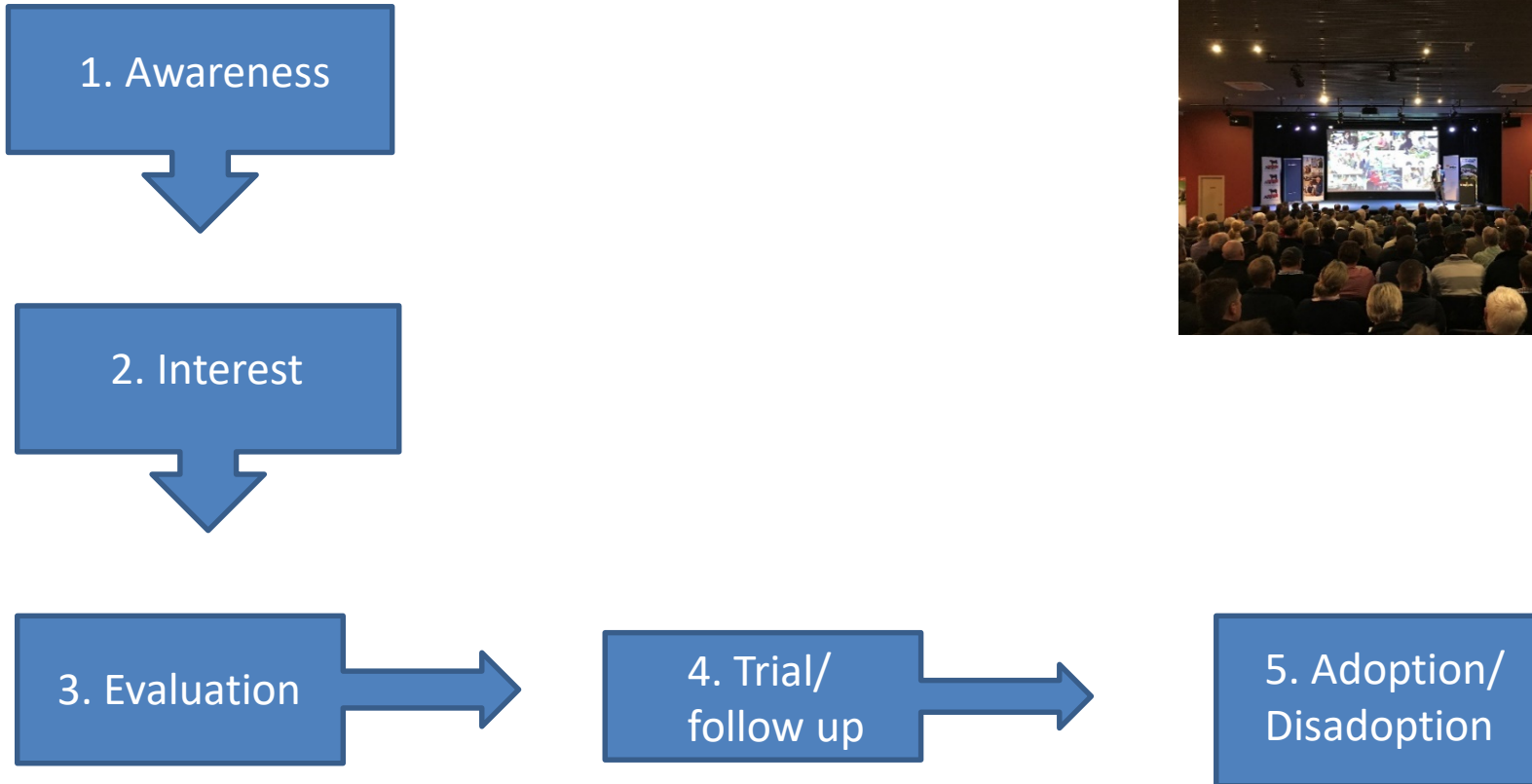


Boundaries to practice change (Turner et al, 2017)

Boundaries to change: Factors of the business may constrain change rather than restricting it from taking place entirely (Turner et al, 2017)

- Producers are likely to have differing boundaries to change around different aspects of their business
- May change over time as producer attitudes and circumstances change

Steps to change



Adapted from van den Ban & Hawkins, 1996, Manjala, 2009 and Rogers, 2003

How practice change occurs

EXAMPLE: 'Lambs Alive!' (category B) workshop and as a result;

- Identify weaknesses in their business
- Become motivated to find ways to improve
- Trial changes on farm via 'Lifting Lamb Survival' (category C)
 - Increase BCS at joining
 - Preg scanning for multiples
 - More FOO at joining and lambing by tightening their joining period.
- Adopt practice change
 - Realised significant improvements to business
 - Engaged a technical expert to assist and support them

3 ingredients

1. Motivation to change
2. Prior knowledge which allowed them to make changes (i.e. condition scoring ewes)
3. Support to continue (engaging a technical expert)

Take home messages

1. There is a direct link between increased skills and knowledge & on-farm practice change.
2. Extension activities which aim to implement on-farm practice change should be designed and delivered over an extended length of time.
3. Follow a 3 step process to maximise successful outcomes of extension activities aiming to implement practice change
 1. raise awareness
 2. generate interest
 3. follow up and support producers through the entire process (from awareness to adoption)



Thank you



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