

## © The Technology Takers – Leading Change in the Digital Era (2019)

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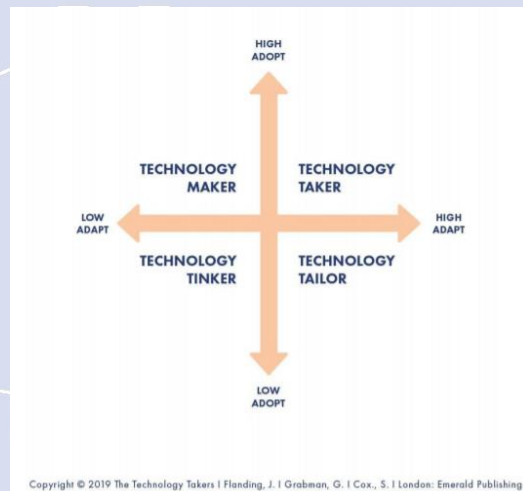
### Are you a Technology Maker, Taker, Tinker or Tailor?

The digital era requires leadership and a renewed strategic approach to adopting continuously renovating technologies and adapting behavior to changing technology. Organizations' leaders must plan to stay ahead of the technology curve, avoid reliance on faltering business processes or plans, or resist being disintermediated from the market and going out of business altogether. *The Adoption-Adaptation Strategy Matrix* shows that players in the digital era can choose among four strategies of varying amounts of adoption of and adaptation to technologies. One can be a Maker, Taker, Tinker, or Tailor. The quadrants of the Strategy Matrix are outlined as follows (See Illustration).

The first quarter is the *Technology Tailor*. Those who choose this strategy approach adaptation with an outdated mindset – and with little desire for behavior change. Tailors adopt technologies and then seek to customize them according to a detailed set of requirements. Those specifications are known only to the organization itself and are used exclusively as internal business support tools. As the digital-era marketplace changes, Tailors must continually re-customize their processes in response. The organization becomes ever disconnected from the latest technologies available. Adopting the latest technologies becomes challenging, and upgrading existing systems cumbersome.

For the Technology Tailor, internally defined business processes are of paramount importance and must be protected from change. Tailoring is often held out to be a low-risk strategy, with old processes preferred over adapting to the requirements of new technologies. Organizations that have chosen the Technology Tailor Strategy claim that they should specify what technology the organization requires for its success.

Yet technology customization has hidden costs. Similar to a poor fitting, over tailored suit, tailored technologies do not fit in well with the digital era. These technologies are proprietary to the organization and do not update automatically. Regardless of the initial cost and splendor of the technology tailoring job, this technology will soon fall out of fashion. As the body of business changes, organizations must pour money into their customized technologies to conform them to whatever needs are current.



The *Technology Tinker* wishes neither to adopt digital-era technologies nor to adapt themselves to these technologies. Tinkering is both the conscientious choice of avoiding contemporary technology as a tool of enlightenment, and a business-as-usual approach. The Amish have, for centuries, practiced conscientious resistance to both technology adaptation and adoption. A successful agrarian community, at least in the United States, the Amish still ride in horse- driven carts and eschew electricity and other modern conveniences. In-the-cloud technologies certainly are not the Amish's concern.

The Technology Tinker Strategy is not uncommon for other established businesses, like the taxis in Washington, DC. These businesses may use some technologies, but those technologies are of the past. Neither tech nor behavior has been updated for the digital era. In DC taxis, the rider sometimes has to beg to pay with a credit card, and rarely will the driver permit noncash payment. Most Technology Tinkers will be disintermediated by the digital era. In fact, the effect of digital-era ride-sharing services has been cata-strophic on the DC taxi business.

Organizations can also strive to be *Technology Makers* of technologies for others' adoption and adaptation. Makers like Uber, Facebook, Apple, Google, etc. invented the technology they have adopted. But makers do not need to adapt their behaviors to outside technological forces; they own these technologies and can deploy them at will.

Some Technology Tailors have a mistaken belief that they are Technology Makers. But investment in excessive customization and reengineering does not a Maker make. Customization is not equivalent to making available to the market configurable and widely adoptable and adaptable technologies.

This book focuses on the *Technology Taker Strategy*. Technology Takers adopt globally applicable, externally defined processes and change their behaviors to adapt to using technologies. Given the difficulties of adopting and adapting, Takers use change management techniques to address the digital era's challenges and opportunities.

The agricultural commodities distributor Cargill recently was forced to change its business strategy to one of technology-taking, rather than being left in the digital dust like Kodak or Blockbuster. Instead of only buying and reselling corn, Cargill now uses cloud- based technologies to provide "big data" to farmers. The *Corn and Soybean Digest* reports that Cargill realized, "You don't have to adopt new technologies, but you have to compete against those who do." Anticipating, using, and responding to new technology separate winners from also-rans.

The Technology Taker Strategy is a plan of action that recognizes that the organization has decided to use constantly changing technologies defined by others. The use of cloud-based process means there is no end to technology-taking and no time where an organization has fully implemented all technology-driven changes. To play in the digital era, an organization builds into its strategic planning the idea of adopting and adapting to constantly renovating, externally controlled technology. A technology taker plans with data as the base of decision-making and positions her organization for increased interconnectivity as technologies evolve. Technology-taking as a strategy is used to ensure that digital-era technology furthers the vision and contributes to the successful delivery of the organization's mission.