

Lime knowledge bite

Critical mass and tipping point in change efforts



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THE LIME GROUP

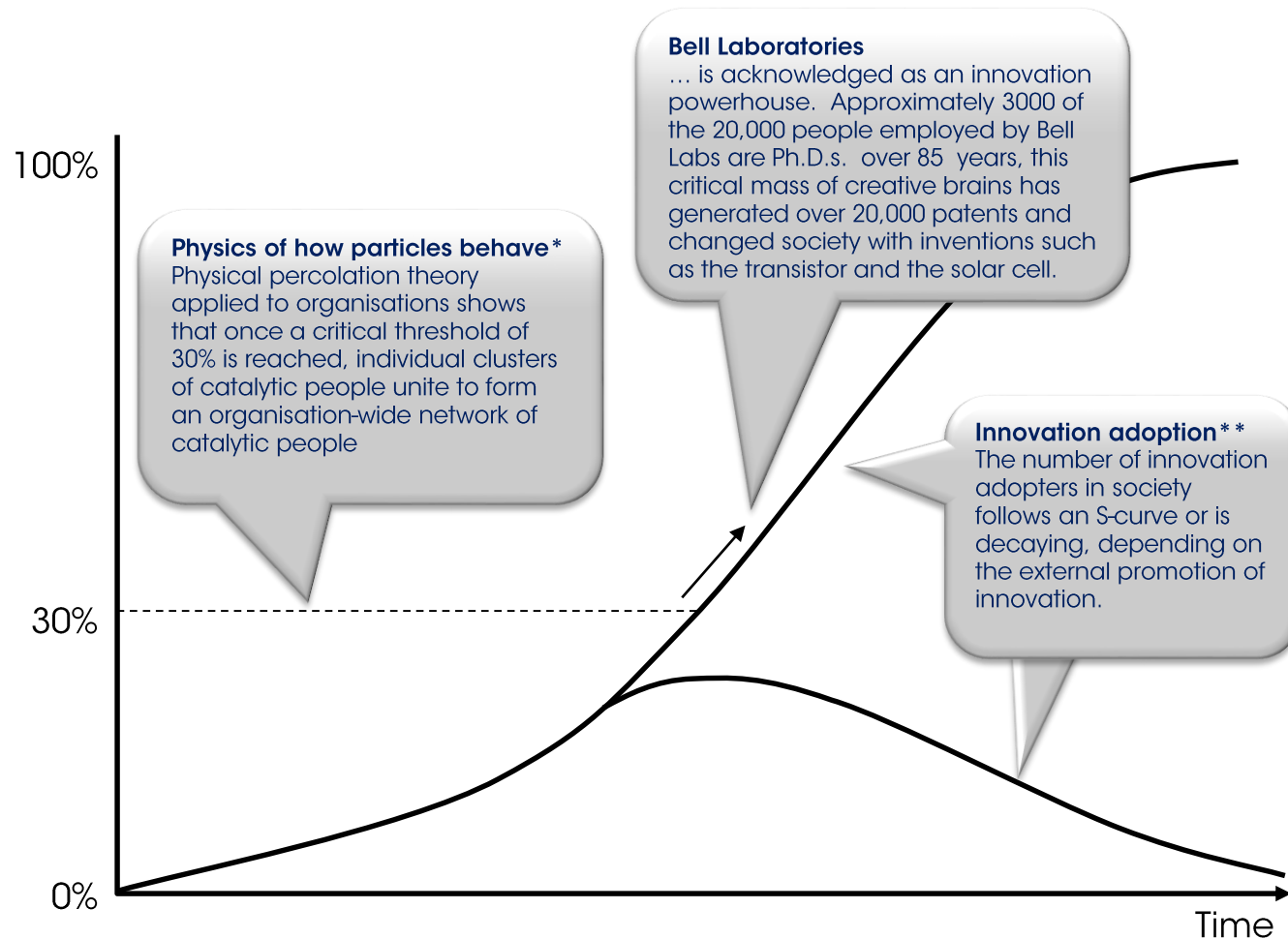


Critical mass

(in a social or organizational context)

is the existence of sufficient momentum to achieve change. That is, a sufficient number of people supporting a new behavior or way of thinking such that the momentum becomes self-sustaining and fuels further growth.

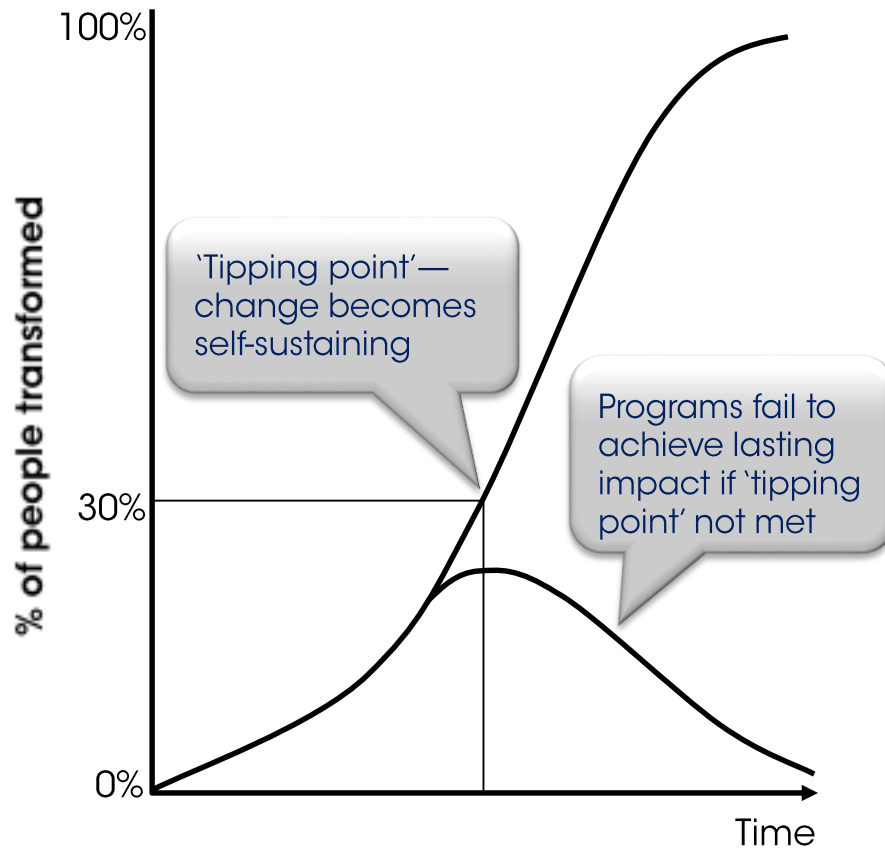
The phenomenon of 'critical mass' has been observed as catalytic in scientific, sociological and organizational contexts



* 'Principles of Condensed Matter Physics', Chalkin and Lubensky (1995), Cambridge University Press
'Critical Mass; How One Thing Leads to Another' (2004), Phillip Ball, Farrar, Straus and Giroux Publishers

** 'The curve of culture diffusion rate' Pemberton, H. E. (1936), American Sociological Review

Successful change efforts input sufficient energy (time, people) to achieve critical mass – the change becomes self sustaining



Why 30%?

Behavioural change and epidemiological studies show that when 30% of a population adopts a new behaviour, or is infected, a 'tipping point' is reached. At this point the change/ infection becomes self-sustaining because at 30%:

New behaviors and thinking are supported. A sufficient number are able to encourage, support and coach each other in the new ways

Change feels inevitable. Those who are unchanged commonly experience 30% of people behaving in a new way as a majority

All people can be reached. Common interaction patterns reveal that 30% of people have close personal connections with the remaining 70%

ACHIEVING SUFFICIENT EARLY MOMENTUM IS CRITICAL