

How the Adoption Model Affects Your Sales and Marketing Effort

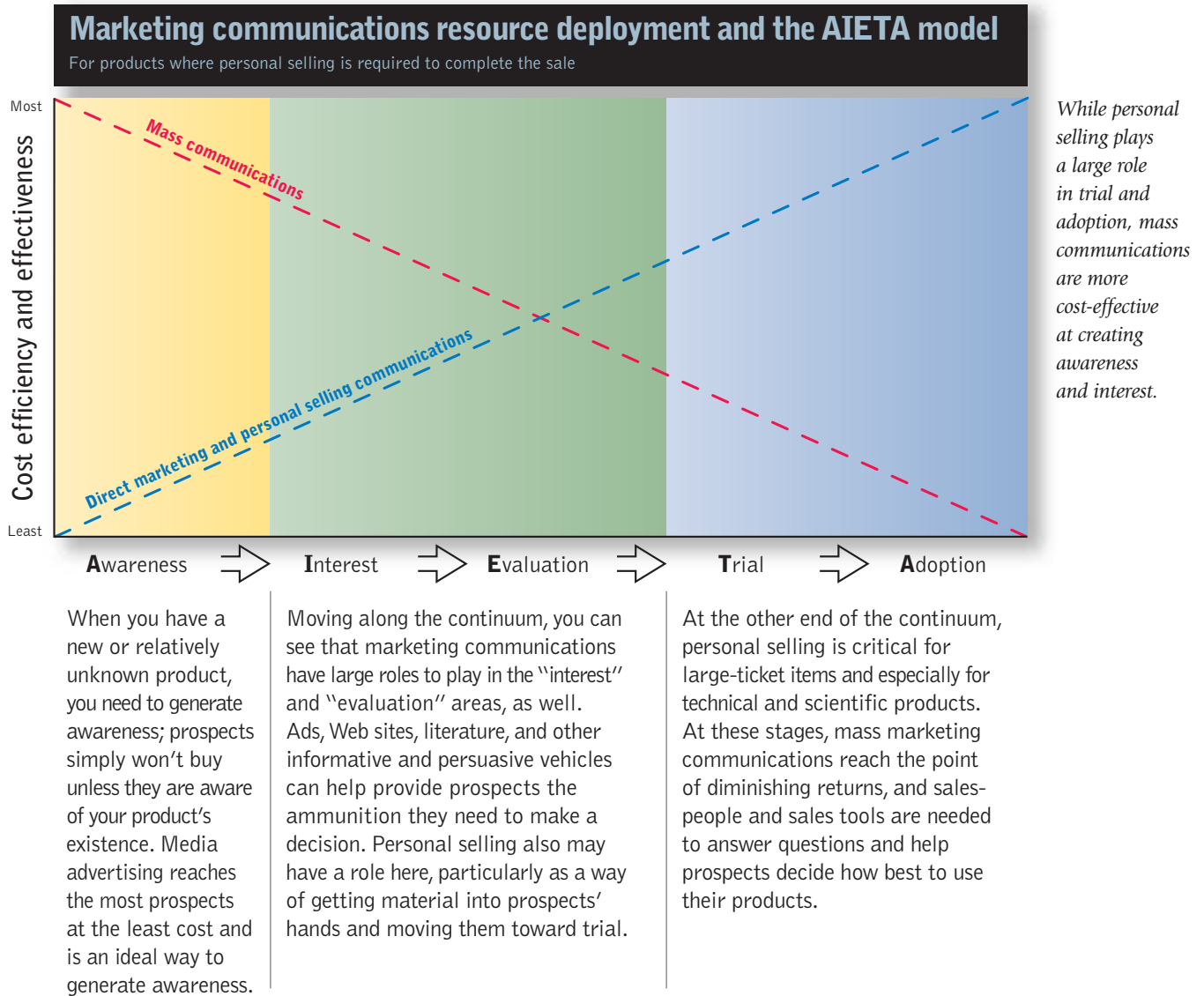
For decades, marketing analysts have studied the behavior of prospects and customers in an attempt to determine the process of getting from awareness to adoption; that is, from first hearing about your product to purchase, preference, and satisfaction. One widely accepted model is the **AIETA** model.¹ According to this model, prospects progress along a continuum in the following steps:

1. **Awareness:** the prospect learns of the product, but knows little or nothing about it beyond its existence and some idea of its benefits.
2. **Interest:** the prospect becomes interested, seeks information, and begins to gather details.
3. **Evaluation:** the prospect imagines him- or herself using the product. At this point, the prospect asks the question, "Can I do it? Can I see myself as the owner of this product?"
4. **Trial:** the prospect experiments with the product on a small scale in an effort to become intimate with it and learn how to use it to his or her best advantage.
5. **Adoption:** the prospect begins large-scale use, which hopefully leads to preference, satisfaction, and repeat purchases.

Depending upon the product, these steps in the Adoption Model can progress rapidly or slowly. For example, you might see a new brand of potato chips in the store and immediately buy a small bag, going from Step 1 to Step 4 in a matter of seconds. For technical and scientific products, the process is usually more drawn-out, involving weeks, months, and sometimes even years of investigation and education.

Using The Adoption Model To Plan Your Sales and Marketing Efforts

What corporate executives often fail to realize is that this Adoption Model provides clear direction for allocating resources between mass marketing and personal selling communications. Simply put, the further back along the AIETA continuum your prospects are, the more cost-effective mass marketing communications will be... and the further toward "adoption" they are, the more personal selling efforts should come into play.



Putting Your Plan In Place

Where do your prospects fall along the AIETA continuum? Unless you have a brand-new product, you'll find prospects all along the way. You need both sales and marketing when you're selling a technical or scientific product. Think about where your needs are greatest; do most people know about your product? Do they truly know its benefits? Is something stopping them from trying it? Once they try it, are you closing large sales as a result? Your answers to these questions will help you determine how to balance marketing communications expenditures in a way that will move more prospects through the AIETA continuum... and on to becoming satisfied customers.

¹ Rogers, E. *Diffusion of Innovations*. 1962:17-18.