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The Future of the Past

Engineer James W. Kerr in his doctoral dissertation entitled "Technology Transfer at the Local Government Level" stated "developing technology worldwide places an inadvertent burden on those who must apply new technology but also on those who must merely cope with or accommodate its advent". This dissertation was published in 1989. That was almost 20 years ago. Has anything really changed?

But I can go back further in the past to find a quote about making progress in the reduction of losses of life and property.

"The serious losses in life and property resulting annually from fires cause me deep concern. I am sure that such unnecessary waste can be reduced. The substantial progress made in the science of fire prevention and fire protection in this country during the past forty years convinces me that the means are available for limiting this unnecessary destruction." – Harry S. Truman authored those words of wisdom in 1947. If you will note he was referring to the previous forty years which would take us back to 1907. Have we learned any lessons?

The IAFC has created a council that is aimed at changing the paradigm of technological acceptance in our profession. This council is dedicated to assuring that technology is adequately evaluated and submitted for consideration into the fire profession with a minimum of delay in understanding how it can help us solve our problems.

The literature recognizes that there is a change model that is like a wave that goes through society. This model includes three groups; the state of the art, mainstream, and the obsolescent. Contained within this model are groups of people called "creators, innovators, early adopters, late adopters, resisters and refusors". There are a variety of ways that individuals and organizations have of dealing with technology. As the wave of change goes through society, those who master technology are more often in control of their destiny more than those who resist technology.

The four stages of incorporating technology include; doing a better job of defining your problem, adapting a technology that solves the problem, adopting a means of incorporating it into your business plan, and then sustaining the use of the technology so it gains mainstream acceptance. The theme behind this whole concept is anticipating the future rather than reacting to it.

The IAFC's Technology Council has been created to refute the rumor that the fire service is 200 years of tradition unhampered by progress. This council is on the lookout for who produces new technology, but



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moreover, defining how we can get our hands on it, where it is being used today and how we can obtain it to assist the fire service in obtaining its goals and objectives.

If our profession was a movie, we might anticipate that we could benefit from being able to go “back to the future”. Instead the council will be attempting to create a future out of our past.