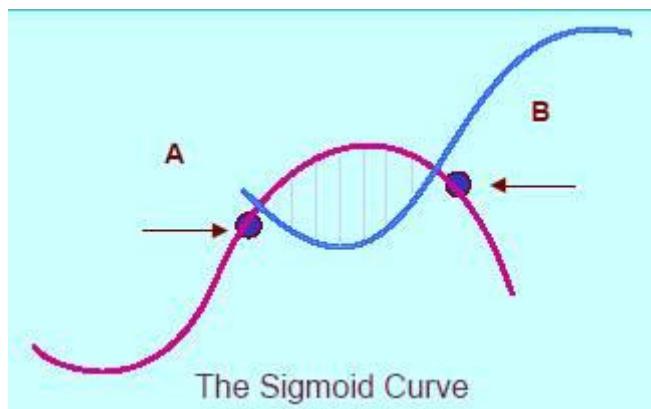


## Charles Handy Sigmoid Curve

According to Handy, the best time to start a new 'curve' is before you reach the peak of your existing one! That way, you will be starting something new when you still have the resources, and the spirit, to take it to new heights. In contrast, most people think of doing something new only when they have reached the bottom of what they are presently involved in.

### Background to the sigmoid curve:

Successful industries are constantly re-inventing themselves, even when things are going well. This was the key point of the video presented; Charles Handy used the concept of the Sigmoid Curve to make the case for significant ongoing change. The sigmoid, or S-shaped, curve charts the trajectory of every successful human system. There is always a first period of experimentation and learning which is followed by a time of growth and development. Ultimately, however, every curve turns downward. The only thing that varies is the length and duration of each part of the curve.



Reference: Chapter Three in Charles Handy (1995) *The Empty Raincoat - Making Sense of the Future* Random House Australia ISBN 0 9930125 3

Today, the speed of every curve seems to be increasing. To keep on growing, the successful industry, organisation and individual, must develop a second curve out of the first. The new curve, however, must start before the first one peaks, at Point A, when all the evidence is that there is no need for change.

Most organisations do not change until they get frightened, at Point B. This is often too late. By then the leaders have lost credibility, resources are depleted and the energy for creative thinking is low. Forty per cent of the Fortune 500 companies of seven years ago no longer exist as independent entities.

Change at Point A, however, results in a period of great confusion, represented by the shaded area in the drawing. At this time there are two contrasting and often competing cultures. The old ways, products and people must continue their efforts to maintain the first curve's momentum.

At the same time, however, the industry must experiment with new ways and new ideas; and not all of them work. The challenge of the second curve is to find a way to start that curve while still building upon the success, learning and maturity gained from the first curve. When standing at Point A, one is presented with two confusing and opposing vistas. When one looks back along the sigmoid curve, they see success, growth and satisfaction. But at Point A, one can also look the other direction and see over the horizon of the curve and see the fall towards Point B. The opportunity is to openly look at what Point B tells you, to see the trends that can lead from A to B, but then to use this information to design a pathway from the current Point A, to the Point A on the next sigmoid curve - a pathway of uninterrupted success.