

Why Some Ideas Survive
and Others Die

MADE
to
STICK
Chip Heath & Dan Heath

VISUAL BOOK SUMMARY



Introduction

Mark Twain had it right Chip and Dan Heath say when he said that “A lie can get halfway around the world before the truth can even get its boots on.” Chip and Dan have become the de-facto sticky brothers veer their bestselling book Made To Stick. As they say on their website “Urban legends, conspiracy theories, and bogus public-health scares circulate effortlessly.” And I think a lot of you have probably seen that. Meanwhile, people with important ideas: businessmen, educators, politicians, journalists, and so on, and so on, really struggle to make their ideas stick. And it’s a fascinating conundrum. The solution say Chip and Dan is their success principle. That’s S-U-C-C-E-S. You can drop the last S and it stands for simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, and emotional stories.

They’re a great starting point for developing and recognizing spreadable, contagious and sticky ideas that will stand the test of time. And I think that’s something that we all need a little bit more of these days.

What follows is a summary of these principles. And as usual we’ve humbly added our own thoughts, so we hope you enjoy.

Principle #1

Success principle number one is simplicity.

Sticky needs to be simple. In order to have a memorable idea we have to be masters of exclusion. As a successful defense lawyer once said and keeping in mind that I used to be a lawyer, “If you make ten arguments, the jury won’t remember any of them, even if they’re all good points.” But one thing we don’t want to do is to confuse simple with simplistic. One of the most memorable examples of a simple idea that says it all, comes from Bill Clinton’s Presidential campaign in 1992. Trying to get his troops to focus on what was important and to stop trying to sound too smart James Carville, Clinton’s righteous campaign manager, created the slogan IT’S THE ECONOMY, STUPID! Some say that this simple idea kept Clinton in his campaign focused on important issues and off of the distractions. Ultimately winning him the Presidency. And we all know what came next. So focus, is one step closer to sticky.

Principle #2

Success principle number two is unexpectedness.

In May 1961, J.F.K. gave a speech to a special session of congress. During the speech he talked about numerous aid programs including expanding their NATO alliance and building television and radio stations in Latin America and South East Asia. Then, drawing near the end of what might be considered a typical address to congress he said this, "I believe that this nation should commit itself, to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth."

How is that for a surprise? Of course you got to back fill some substance to make the surprise stick. People got to believe that this can be done. The goal is not only to get people's attention but it's to keep it as well. The reason unexpectedness works so well is that our brains are wired to notice things that are different. And for those congressmen and for the entire United States of America even. When they're listening to Kennedy

give a speech, you're expecting all this stuff about the NATO alliance, and building television and radio stations and so on. They're not expecting him to say that we're going to fly a guy to the moon. A place no one's ever been before.

So remember this when you're building your marketing story, your advertising picture, even just going to give a speech to your employees. Avoid the camouflage of jargon and cliché and you're going to be able to unearth something very unexpected and sticky.

Principle #3

Success principle number three, is concreteness.

Just as our brains are wired to notice differences they're also wired to remember concrete data. Hence, the success of that Guinness book, Letterman's top ten list and even the stickiness of your own phone number. We can recall concrete data better because it is usually associated with other sensory clues. So what I'm going to do is ask you take this simple test which was done by David Rueben a cognitive physiologist at Duke University. And it's only going to take about thirty seconds. You ready? Okay, here we go.

Remember the first line of Hey Jude. Now remember the Mona Lisa. Now remember the house where you've spent most of your childhood. Now remember the definition of truth. Okay. Immediate associations will probably jump into your mind. You know the image of the Mona Lisa, the way she is glancing at you. A memory of the first few bars McCartney's baritone from Hey Jude. Perhaps even the aroma of your childhood

home. However, the definition of truth exercise probably didn't conjure anything in particular. Why? Because it's an abstract concept it's not concrete. Now think about this in terms of your last sales pitch or your last marketing piece, whatever. You've only got a few seconds to get your point across to make it stick. What associations are you conjuring?

Principle #4

Success principle number four, which is credible.

Eighty six percent of all statistics are fiction.

Think about that one, just as we're wired to pay attention to differences we're also wired to believe facts.

There's something wonderfully unequivocal about data nugget that sticks with us. Of course, organizations worldwide have jumped on the band wagon, spouting numbers and lists and factoids of every type. Your number one opportunity is to build your credibility by using facts in a meaningful way. Here's a great example from Stephen Covey, the mister seven habits guy. In his book The 8th Habit he turned a statistic from something meaningless into meaningful, and here it is. Here's the meaningless part, "Only 37 percent of people said that they have a clear understanding of what the organization is trying to achieve and why." Probably doesn't say very much to you. However, he turned this into this wonderfully sticky thought. Try this one on for

size. If a soccer team had the same scores, only four of the eleven players on the field would know which goal is theirs. Can you spot the difference? Let me know which one you're remember in the morning, because I guarantee, or I'm willing to bet you a hundred dollars, that you'll remember the soccer one before you'll remember the meaningless one.

Principle #5

Okay, success principle number five, is to make things emotional.

Donald Cowan a Canadian neuropsychologist tells us that, “Logic leads to conclusions and emotion leads to action.” Well, as it happens it appears that emotion also leads to more spending. In a Carnegie Mellon study, people were given five dollars to spend on an African children’s charity. One group is given a letter that lists its statistics about problems facing children. Remember the statistics part? Another group was given a story about a specific child, and you want to know the results? The people who read statistics gave an average of one dollar and fourteen cents. The people who read the story however gave an average of two dollars and forty eight cents, more than double. Why? We’re human. We relate to human stories and emotional appeals stick in our minds influencing our behavior. It’s an obvious framework applying to marketing but where else can you take it within your organization. Can you

use emotion in storytelling to make even your next PowerPoint stickier? We think you can.

Principle #6

Success principle number six is stories.

Quick, who is that guy and what's with the pants? Now for those of you listening on the podcast that's a picture of Jared, that relentless subway sandwich guy. He lost two hundred and forty five pounds eating only subway sandwiches. Yes that's very sticky. Take all of the principles explored in the past few pages and in the past few minutes and roll them up into one sticky story. Jared's story. Lets see how it stacks up against the success principles.

Number one is simple, guy eats subs, guy loses a lot of weight. Boom! Your done. Two, its unexpected. This story violates our notions for fast food. I'm sure everybody has seen supersize me, and the guy who goes to McDonalds and eats there for a month and he almost dies. That's our notion for fast food, it's going to kill you eventually. Not this time. Number three its concrete, two hundred and forty five pounds lost. That's pretty concrete because if you're like me

you probably thought man that's more than most people weigh. So I have a concept in my mind about what two hundred and forty five pounds means. It's a lot of weight. Number five, it's credible. If the guy who wore size sixty pants can do it and can lose a whole human being of his body. Anybody can do it. And lastly as we know, it's a story. This simple, unexpected, concrete, credible and emotional story turned out to be the most successful advertising campaigns the world has ever seen. So, where are your organizations stories? Are they simple, are they unexpected, are they concrete, are they credible, are they emotional?

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