

MADE TO STICK

Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die

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The Web site for this book is at www.madetostick.com.

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MAIN IDEA

“Sticky” ideas are those which are highly memorable and exceptionally long-lasting in their impact. Everyone in business would like to develop ideas that are sticky, as would most parents when they are attempting to teach values to their children. So what exactly is it that makes an idea sticky in the first place?

While there are no hard-and-fast formulas for developing a sticky idea, there is a short checklist of six principles which most of the successful sticky ideas of the past have tended to use:

To develop sticky ideas, make your message:	▶ 1	Simple	State the essential core of your idea succinctly	✓
	▶ 2	Unexpected	Use surprise to grab people's attention	✓
	▶ 3	Concrete	Pack in solid ideas and images	✓
	▶ 4	Credible	Embed credentials right into your message	✓
	▶ 5	Emotional	Make the listener feel something	✓
	▶ 6	Story Based	Help people learn how they should respond	✓

“This is an idea success story. Even better, it’s a truthful idea success story. We wrote this book to help you make your ideas stick. By ‘stick’, we mean that your ideas are understood and remembered, and have a lasting impact – they change your audience’s opinions or behavior. When we ask people how often they need to make an idea stick, they tell us the need arises between once a month and once a week. For managers, these are ‘big ideas’ about new strategic directions and guidelines for behavior. Teachers try to convey themes and conflicts and trends to their students. Columnists try to change readers’ opinions on policy issues. Religious leaders try to share spiritual wisdom with their congregants. Nonprofit organizations try to persuade volunteers to contribute their time and donors to contribute their money to a worthy cause. Give the importance of making ideas stick, it’s surprising how little attention is paid to the subject.”

– Chip Heath and Dan Heath

The six characteristics of sticky ideas

1. Make your message simple.	Page 2
The ideal here is to create ideas which are both simple and profound, like proverbs which exist in every culture around the world. To come up with something profound, you’ll probably need to forego all of the supporting points you could mention and instead find a simple way to express one main point. This is not as easy as it sounds.	
2. Make your message unexpected.	Page 3
To get people to pay attention, you have to violate their expectations and be counterintuitive. Surprise is good as an initial attention getter but it doesn’t last. For a sticky idea to endure, it has to generate interest and curiosity. It has to open gaps in people’s knowledge and then fill them.	
3. Make your message concrete	Page 4
The human brain is far more attuned to remembering vivid images than it is to interpreting lofty messages. Naturally sticky ideas are full of clear and bright images people won’t forget in a hurry. By couching everything in concrete images, ambiguity and the abstractness of meaningless phrases are left far behind. People get the idea and remember it because they can see it in their mind’s eye.	
4. Make your message credible.	Page 5
Truly sticky ideas carry their own credentials. They provide ways for people to test for themselves whether or not they are true. At times, this is best done by posing a rhetorical question people can answer for themselves rather than quoting hard numbers or other statistical data.	
5. Make your message emotional.	Page 6
Everyone is instinctively wired to feel things for other people rather than for abstractions. This is why people are likely to donate more to a needy individual they have met than they will to an entire impoverished country. Therefore, sticky messages get personal. They find ways to take hard facts and make them come alive through the listener’s emotions.	
6. Make your message story based.	Page 7
Stories are memorable. Over time and with repetition, they can form a mental catalog on how to respond to various situations which may arise. Stories also allow us to practice and rehearse our own future responses. And even better, people remember stories far more easily than they will a listing of the facts. Stories show people how to act on sticky ideas.	
Putting everything together in a sticky message	Page 8

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