

CYNTHIA'S BOOK REVIEW FOR BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS

The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference by Malcolm Gladwell

Tickle Me Elmo, Italian Charm Bracelets, Starbuck's Coffee, SUV's—what happened that people scramble to get them? These products have reached their "Tipping Point", as defined in this book by Malcolm Gladwell. As with epidemics of chicken pox or the flu, consumer products can take off like a rocket. They experience one dramatic moment when everything changes in a flash. The buzz spreads like wildfire. That buzz is usually created by seemingly small events that have a big effect.

The first rule of the Tipping Point is The Law of the Few. Gladwell purports that there are just a few types of people that get the fire started. He calls these few people Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen. *Connectors* bring together different groups of people. They know multitudes of people and exist in various "worlds", and they're able to bridge the gaps between different worlds because they have personal connections to each. Gladwell further states that the closer a product or idea comes to a Connector, the greater the likelihood of success. A good example of a connector is Oprah Winfrey.

Mavens are knowledge data banks who willingly and enthusiastically share their knowledge. Their passion is to learn, teach, and help.

Salesmen persuade, but it usually isn't through what they say. It's small non-verbal actions (e.g., smiles, nods) that make the big impact, according to psychological research examples that Gladwell shares in his book.

The Stickiness Factor, the second rule of the Tipping Point, speaks to the degree to which people can remember a product or idea. It has to be simple enough that it first catches people's attention and then it has to have enough impact to "stick" with them.

The third and final rule is The Power of Context. This equally important component stems from the fact that epidemics are sensitive to the circumstances and conditions that exist when they occur. Where and when people hear about or experience the product or idea influences whether or not it will reach its Tipping Point. It will be the one dramatic moment when it seems that everyone knows (and often wants) the product or to embrace the idea.

The Tipping Point is fascinating because Gladwell skillfully illustrates the principles, taking his examples from history, medicine, urban crime, fashion, and children's television. Once you start reading it, you'll find it hard to put down.

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