

BYBO Handout: Tipping Point Basics

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Malcolm Gladwell: The Tipping Point

Basics of The Tipping Point:

Three Rules/Principles of Epidemics...

- Contagiousness - a function of the messenger
- Little causes can have big effects
- Change happens quickly & dramatically

Three Agents of Change & Rules of The Tipping Point:

1. Law of the Few

2. **The Stickiness Factor** (characteristics of successful ideas - memorable + move us to action. A property of the message.)

Contagiousness & Stickiness are important to keep separate as they are very different & follow very different patterns. A 'contagious' personality can spread a piece of info or idea a 1000 ways - simultaneously. A 'specialist' in Stickiness will have a genius for creating messages that are memorable & that change people's behavior. Soooo Contagiousness is in larger part a function of the messenger; Stickiness is primarily a property of the message,)

Smoking is a good example: for some who become totally addicted - it is a STICKY habit. For the regular but light & "at choice" smoker, it is contagious but unsticky - similar to social drinkers.

3. The Power of Context

- a. epidemics are sensitive to the conditions & circumstances of the times & places in which they occur to become contagious.
- b. skillful use of group power - an organizational talent or an entertaining or charismatic one.

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c. Rule of 150 - humans natural capacity for 'social channel capacity.' Best way to find yours is add up # by listing all whose death would leave you truly devastated. av = appx 12 names or between 10-15 = av # in our 'sympathy' group which can only expand according to the emotional energy we can give those people. Caring deeply is exhausting - we will overload at some point. Similarly, we can only sort & process up to certain # of tones, images, situations. *This is our channel capacity.* Human neocortex ratio is appx for 150 people we can have a genuinely social channel - know who they are & how they relate to us. Test: You would feel comfortable joining them uninvited. (British/Robin Dunbar's research in anthropology.)

People who create the phenomenon of word-of-mouth: (The Law Of The Few looks at people who are critical in spreading information.)

- **Connectors**
- **Mavens**
- **Salespersons**

Any social epidemic or 'trend' is heavily dependent on the involvement of people with a rare set of social gifts.

Six degrees of separation based on this. Identify 40 people you call your circle of friends (not family or co-workers) & in each case, work backwards until you can identify the person ultimately responsible for setting in motion the series of connections that led to that friendship. What names do you find coming up over & over?

Who does your 'circle' actually belong to? These people we rely on more than we think or may acknowledge -- they are Connectors. People with a special gift for bringing people together.

Connector Criterion:

- They know a LOT of people - friends & acquaintances - making social connections is natural for them

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- They are more than an observer - finds the patterns of acquaintanceship & interaction in which people arrange themselves fascinating.
- They collect people like some collect stamps.
- Most evaluate a person based on if they will qualify as a friend;

Connectors often do perceive value also in casual, social connection

AND somehow consistently can bring their diverse worlds of people together & will & do so. These disparate worlds then DO tend to enjoy each other.

They are masters of the 'weak tie' (casual/occasional) & somehow also in keeping awareness of it.

Mavens Criterion:

Artists of 'word-of-mouth'

Information specialists - they collect it & many bring it to them.

One who accumulates knowledge.

Once they 'know' they want to tell YOU about it, too.

Market **Mavens** are socially motivated to educate you about consumer 'stuff' & will even shop for you

They are genuinely interested & curious - & often enthusiastically so

They can be exacting & thorough about their knowledge (serious approach.)

Consumer Reports is the generalist's **Maven** Bible, but true Mavens may send them corrections for their data.

They can be almost pathologically helpful but usually catch themselves just in time with humor.

It fulfills them to help.

They read more than others; retain more; share more -- naturally.

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What distinguishes them in terms of 'the tipping point' is they pass things along.

When or If a **Connector** may or may not give you advice or 'inside info' you may or may not take it; if a **Maven** has it, they **WILL** -- & you'll almost always take & act on it if you're in the market for that - **Mavens KNOW** & they are trusted to know.

They are different personalities "at work" - both Connectors and Mavens have the power to spark word-of-mouth epidemics.

MAVENS ARE NOT PERSUADERS; THEIR MOTIVATION IS TO EDUCATE AND HELP.

Salespersons Criterion:

To get a start a true social epidemic usually depend on persuasion.

Mavens are data banks & messengers; **Connectors** are the social glue - they spread it; **Salespersons** provide service, expertise, & caring beyond the call of duty.

What separates out the epidemic catalyst "great" **Salesperson** from the 'good' one is the # & quality of answers they have for clients.

What differentiates them (**Salespersons**) goes beyond their info & words - the non-duplicatable is their energy, enthusiasm, charm, likeability, and (mostly) optimism.

Extraordinary **Salespersons** tend to:

- Have high capacity for interactional synchrony - a rhythmical physical dimension in joining another with their speech, faces, shoulders, & hands - in harmony.
- Have equalizing speech rates in conversational patterns (harmony.)
This is NOT mirroring - which mostly usually makes people uncomfortable & non-trusting if prevalently present.

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They can, though, draw others into their own rhythms & can dictate the terms of the interaction – which feels like synchronization.

Skilled musicians & good speakers also have this gift.

They can build a level of trust & rapport in 5-10 min. most require half an hour to accomplish.

They have physical & aural harmony + motor mimicry.

IMMUNITY FACTOR:

A Tipping Point can extinguish due to immunity. We are now 'immune' to the telephone for telemarketing.

Email isn't effective just because it is sent or received, nor are faxes.

The cure for Immunity is still what has always worked:

- **Connectors**
- **Mavens**
- **Salespersons.**

How do you find them???

Connectors: You usually don't - they don't need to be found - they find you.

Mavens: hmmm...harder. **Mavens** are the type who may take a chance on intuition & they are 'expert knowers' with a LOT to go on when they do. You will need to recognize what special events or time or a place will bring them out. Example: Lexus had a minor mechanical need to recall their first release of their luxury model. They knew 'the informed discriminator' was their primary new owner - what we'd now call a **Car Maven**. Rather than use the typical broad, generic type of factory recall, they called each, then mailed a personalized letter with instructions. If they lived 100+ miles from a dealer or it created a hardship for

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owner to bring in for the minor correction, they sent a mechanic to their house. They also washed, waxed, & filled gas tank of EVERY Lexus brought in. They then had **Lexus Mavens** vs. alarmed owners + an immediate reputation for excellent customer service for a brand/company brand new to the luxury car market. (Note: TRUE story.)

Recap Repeated:

The Tipping Point

3 Rules/Principles of Epidemics:

- Contagiousness
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3 Agents of Change & Rules of The Tipping Point:

- Law of the Few
- The Stickiness Factor
- The Power of Context

and...

- Connectors
- Mavens
- Salespersons

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Original Publication was:

Malcolm Gladwell; ©2005 **The Tipping Point**; paperback 304pps.

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