

DigitalNow 2008

Day 3 General Session

Dan Heath, author

Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die

What makes an idea stick?

The marketplace of ideas is not fair, but we can learn messages from the way it functions.

Let's talk about urban legends... "the Great Wall of China is the only man-made structure you can see from outer space." In actuality it is too narrow of a structure to see from that distance. Here is another one... KFC had changed their name to take the emphasis off of the fact that the chicken is fried... the rumor was started that the "US Gov't forced KFC to change their name because

Why do urban legends stick? They are understandable and usually believable.

The same traits seem to exist no matter what the actual fact. Sticky ideas share these traits:

- Simple
- Unexpected
- Concrete
- Credible
- Emotional
- Stories

(SUCCEsS)

Some ideas just seem to need special care so they can "stick" and be effective for organizations.

Four-part framework for making ideas stick:

- Get people to pay attention
- Convince them change is needed
- Paint a picture of your vision
- Make it easier for them to cooperate

Get people to pay attention:

Need to violate their schema to get them to notice.

Voodoo Doughnut-based in Portland, OR. They serve doughnuts that are completely outrageous including a VooDoo doughnut dolls, Captain Crunch doughnuts, doughnuts topped with Maple syrup and bacon over the doughnut. They have taken everything we know to be "standard" about doughnuts and turned it completely on its end.

We need to make *uncommon sense* of our ideas so that they will stick. There is an art to surfacing your ideas to make them seem new and exciting... violate the schema.

There is a gap between what we know and what we do not know. The Gap Theory says that it causes us discomfort to have a gap on our knowledge, and so in order to relieve that discomfort, we fill the gap.

Find your uncommon sense and open up the curiosity gap.

Credible-Convince them a change is needed

Relationships between numbers and application stick, but numbers do not.

Bottled water costs 8.4 cents per ounce. The municipal water in San Francisco costs .00022 cents per ounce.

Buy a bottle of Evian at \$1.35 and when it is done fill it with tap water from San Francisco. It would take 10 years, 5 months and 21 days of filling the bottle once a day to reach the cost of \$1.35 of the purchase price of one bottle of water.

Hamburger Helper- been a very strong brand for years, but had been declining recently. General Mills wanted to reverse this trend. The marketing person in charge of this went into homes in the mid-west to observe what actually was happening in the kitchen and the grocery store. She found out they needed a more convenient packaging and that the mothers basically bought the same flavors every time. They just really wanted to make sure the shelves in the store always had the product available. The marketing person went back to the offices and brought along the stories to support what she had learned.

Concrete-Paint a picture of your vision

You need to make a real concrete picture of your mission statement and vision. Needs to be very specific.

Duke hired Coach K for Duke many years ago. When they hired him, they said will you win a National Championship in the next 3 years. He said "no, but I will promise you I will have Duke in the National Championship rounds in 7 years. We are going to pick off the best defensive players, then pick off top regional talent as they want to stick to home, then we will be able to compete for the top national talent, then to the National Championship". He did this in 6 years and while they did lose the National Title that year, they have been a powerhouse ever since, winning the National Titles several times. While his approach was more of a zigzag path, he reached his vision. Your vision does not have to be a straight path, it can be more of a zigzag approach.

As association executives, we need to really paint solid visions of what our organizations do to remain successful organizations.

Make it easier for people to understand

We know the value that comes from knowledge, but the curse is once we get the knowledge and experience, we start to think in abstract and talk on different levels

Why study Algebra high school kids say all the time? Teachers might respond "It provides procedures for understanding the processes around the world"....UGH? However, if explained that even though we will never really use algebra itself, learning algebra is all about the thought process....training our brain to think in a certain way that will help us in our daily lives, students understand why they have to learn algebra.

We need to really be clear about what our ideas are and what we really want the outcome to be so that we can get others involved. Sometimes we cannot get people to buy off on our ideas or be part of the solution because they just do not understand our ideas and do not want to commit.