

The Sticking Point. ●

HOW TO GIVE EVERY IDEA A POTENT TWIST

Book Made To Stick: Why Some Ideas Take Hold and Others Come Unstuck; Random House; London; 2007.

Authors Chip and Dan Heath

The Big Idea Your greatest asset is your mind; your greatest advantage is the stickiness of your messaging.

Speed RAP We're all scientists in one way. We all have theories and hypotheses. We're all forever testing our latest big idea. You think you know how an idea might turn out, but you can't be sure. You may well find that you get a different result from the one you anticipated. We all regularly have to revise our idea of how the world works in light of new information.

A successful idea gets to the simple truth - the core message - of a communication. A successful idea, message or product works because people *get it*.

Your Challenge If you want, or expect, someone to want or buy your ideas you ought to be willing to put in the effort to make it land and stick in the mind of your audience. Take the time to reverse-engineer every idea *before* you commit and give it a shockingly potent **TWIST** - The 'Will It Stick' Test. We've upped **Book Rapper's** stickiness; now up yours!

RESOURCES : anything you use to generate wealth.

ACTIONS : an act of will, a deed completed.

PROFITS : to gain an advantage or benefit.

Review : Made to Stick

Précis

Any of us with the right insight and the right message can make an idea stick.

Whether devising a campaign or writing a book about penetrating clutter (like this one), ideas must stick to have visibility.

Successful ideas share common principles.

Made to Stick digs into these common principles and explains how you can put them to use to communicate your own ideas.

An idea that is understood, and remembered, and has lasting impact, can change audience opinion or behaviour.

By using a combination (the more the merrier) of these shared common principles, almost anyone can craft an idea that will make a difference.

Who is the Book For?

The book was written for a type of problem, not a type of person.

The problem is this:

When you have an important idea, how do you communicate it in a way that has impact?

We all have this problem - by the bucket load! This book can help.

The world of ideas is unfair. Intrinsic value doesn't always win.

Teachers, legislators and public health workers agonize over how to get their message across, and meanwhile, dumb chain e-mails, trite gossip, and 'wot the' ideas propagate with no advertising budget and no authority figures supporting them.

This book evens up the playing field for all worthy communicators struggling to make their idea stick.

The book is recommended to anyone and everyone with something important to communicate.

Features

Two smart brothers – one a professor of organizational behaviour at Stanford, the other an educational consultant living 3000 miles away – have teamed up to openly develop Malcolm Gladwell's 'Stickiness Factor' (*The Tipping Point*, 2000).

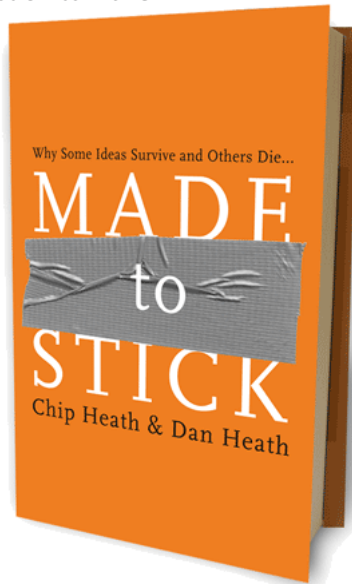
In *Made to Stick*, the Authors, Dan and Chip Heath, explain how to nurture ideas that will succeed - ideas that will penetrate clutter and then 'stick' - in a noisy, unpredictable, chaotic, changing world.

They have bundled together 6 common principles to form a SUCCEsS acronym (of course; they are American). It may sound a bit cringe-worthy however, it's potently memorable:

These 6 common principals – in combination – make the difference between what works and what fails. And, the brothers Heath have peppered almost every page with compelling examples of their SUCCEsS principles.

This is a formula business book and there's nothing new here; it's mostly common sense and stuff you've heard before. It isn't a profound piece of business literature; and, this is precisely why it works so powerfully.

If you do read the book (we suggest you keep a copy on your desk), delve into pages 247-249 where the author's recommend what to do about common communication problems. It's one of the most valuable parts of the book.



Simple	more than one idea is too many
Unexpected	surprise grabs attention
Concrete	the more senses you hook the better
Credible	be direct, tell truth as in don't hide
Emotional	stuff touches even the big boys
Stories	kids know the value of stories

Review : Made to Stick

Benefits

The key benefit you can get out of this book is to apply the principles to test your idea before you commit talent, dollars, time, and other resources to it.

Once you've got an idea in your head, there are a handful of shared, common principles that will help you communicate it. This is where SUCCEsS comes in.

Armed with the simple example that is *Made To Stick*, you're empowered to convince (lots of) people (even across a big organization) to consider a different way of doing things. Cut to the core; make it **Simple**.

Good science, good advertisements, and good stories raise mysteries that cause people to want to listen until the puzzle is resolved – often with an **Unexpected** solution.

It's so much easier to baffle with abstraction than to be **Concrete**. Yet, abstract messages run a high risk of failure! Allow others to play with you by keeping things simple and Concrete. For example, don't say, "I think we should devote more resources to marketing". Say, "Here's a list of the top 20 marketing-brains in the Melbourne area. I want to invite them to a one-day seminar on November 27. It will cost \$12,000 to pull off. Who's in?" The response - even where others disagree – will be productive and anchored in reality. Your idea will stick in their minds.

Revamp your marketing material. Deconstruct your message and make it more memorable, resonant, and effective. Be direct; tell it like it is. **Credibility** is the only truth people want.

A sticky idea – like a proverb or fable – helps us to make sense of life, and to connect to our species; it helps to keep us on track, and to guide our offspring. Build **Emotional** impact into your idea and it may have a shot at staying the distance.

Dan and Chip Heath tell a **Story** that provides stimulation – knowledge about how to act; and, inspiration – motivation to act.

Recommendation

This has been is a valuable book for us to **RAP**. Its SUCCEsS is that it's colourful, clear, fun, memorable, and, most important, useful. A bonus is that it is light, entertaining, and bubbles up with the brotherly humour.

No book can provide everything and this one falls short in a couple of ways. A weakness is the absence of workable visuals and readable graphics. (A great resource for visual metaphors is McAlhone and Stuart's *A Smile in the Mind*. Grab a copy; it's a classic!)

Another disappointment is that it's more about their SUCCEsS principles than it is about how to apply them. Hopefully, **Book Rapper Action Plans** will fill the gap for you.

Move on now to our own **Context** on Idea Stickiness. Then, pay attention as we **RAP** the authors SUCCEsS principles, and then, get ready for our **Action Plan** to give your idea a potent **TWIST** – The **Will It Stick Test**.



The Curse of Knowledge

It takes a certain style of thinking to generate new knowledge and new concepts. It takes a different style of thinking to present your message so others can grab hold of it.

The Curse of Knowledge says once we know something we can't imagine what it's like not to know.

In effect, it becomes difficult to share what we know because we can't easily re-create it in some one else's mind. It's a bit like trying to tell someone in words what you are viewing in a photograph that only you can see.

The expert spends a lifetime researching, learning, sorting and developing their great idea. In comparison they spend a fleeting moment in presenting it as if everyone will instantly get it. That's the Curse of Knowledge.

The solution is to invest a comparable amount of time coming up with ways to make your ideas stick in the minds of your audience.

Context: How to Live Forever

Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* (2000) depicts the journey of Roman General Maximus Decimus Meridius (played by Russell Crowe) from charismatic war-time army hero, to emotionally bankrupt (Spanish!) slave, to all-conquering Gladiator. Maximus, with charisma and courage restored, takes on and annihilates his nemesis Emperor Commodus (Joaquin Phoenix).

The movie is memorable for several reasons, not the least of which is Russ's riveting Oscar winning performance. There is also the opening finger-peeping, visceral battle scene in distant Germania, and the scintillating set design of 180 AD Rome

In one air-sucking scene, barbarian gladiators arrive at the foot of the Coliseum standing agog at the sheer scale of it.

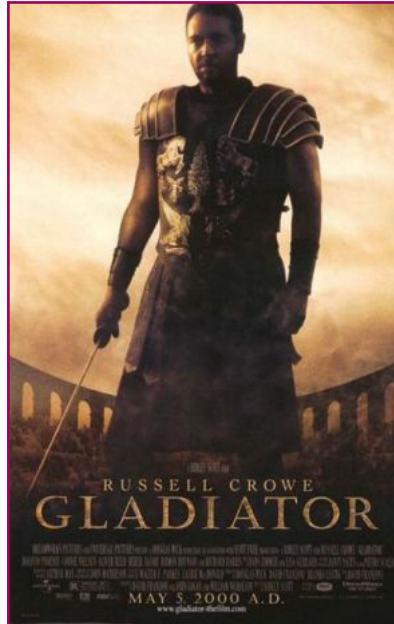
This puts the magnificence of Rome into a useful historical context because it highlights a profound fictional conversation in the movie

It's a very short conversation about ten minutes into the film; it's a conversation that probably went 'unheard' by most of the audience.

Marcus Aurelius, the Emperor of Rome (Richard Harris) is talking to Maximus (our Russ). He expresses his concerns over the future of Rome. He starts with the question 'What is Rome?' and then says...

"There was once a dream that was Rome. You could only whisper it. Anything more than a whisper and it would vanish, it was so fragile and I fear that it will not survive the winter."

Two millennium ago, Rome was more than a vibrant city, it was an empire that stretched around the Mediterranean Sea. This was at the heart of Marcus Aurelius' concern.



Today, the remnants of this Idea are still with us, the physical element is a city paved with history and inhabited by a couple of million people. Yet the cultural legacy lives on in more subtle and more invisible ways.

From today's standpoint, to imagine Rome as a mere Idea, and one so fragile that it could vanish, is as astonishing as the Coliseum was to the Gladiators.

Rome was – in around 180AD - an Idea! Just an Idea in the mind and heart of the passionate Emperor of this strife-torn, unstable settlement.

Now, here's the Point. Doesn't everything start out as a fragile idea, a mere fleeting thought?

An idea is at the core of everything – yes, everything - that was ever created. Every man-made concept, conversation or thing started as a fleeting thought in someone's head.

Yet, the power of Rome, as an idea that has flourished for 2000 years, shows that ideas can be immortal. And this, is where *Made to Stick* finds its place.

Context: How to Live Forever *continued*

It shows how to take your passing fancy and turn it into your 'Rome' – an idea that grows into physical form and can live through the ages – or at least until you're onto your next project.

How do you take your fleeting fancy and translate it into an Idea that's long lived, or at least, makes a difference to you here and now?

Sticky Ideas are fundamental to everything we all do. Business itself is a powerful Idea; an Idea that at some Point in pre-history started as a fanciful thought in someone's head. Every minor and major business started in the same way. Someone had a thought and they framed it in a way that stuck.

The raw power of an Idea is its potential for immortality. Can you imagine having an idea that lived forever? Here's how...

First you need a thought – a little gem that you think up or, nick from someone else.

Next, you add flesh to your skeletal thought. Until *Make It Stick* – this may have been hit and miss / pot luck / touch and go. You perform microsurgery on that embryonic Idea to test its core purity – it's simplicity.

When, and only when, it passes the SUCCEs test, you Innovate (apply it) and give your Idea a life of its own in the hearts and minds of others.

We're all in the business of selling. Yet, have you ever wondered precisely what it is that you're selling?

The correct answer is that you're selling an Idea. We're all in the business of Ideas because, ultimately, the idea is what is sold.

We don't buy physical things or strategies or concepts; we buy an Idea. We buy the idea of what that thing can do for us.

Make It Stick could be renamed "How to Sell Ideas". Ultimately, that's what's up for sale - an Idea - no matter what the product. We attempt to enrol others into an Idea so that we can move it from its fragile, embryonic state to a more substantial form; a product from which we can profit.

When we set out to sell an Idea, the first sale we need to make is to ourselves. So, how do you decide if your idea is worth buying? How do you decide if it will work? You trust your gut, because you're the ultimate consumer; and/or you TWIST your idea because The 'Will It Stick' Test works!

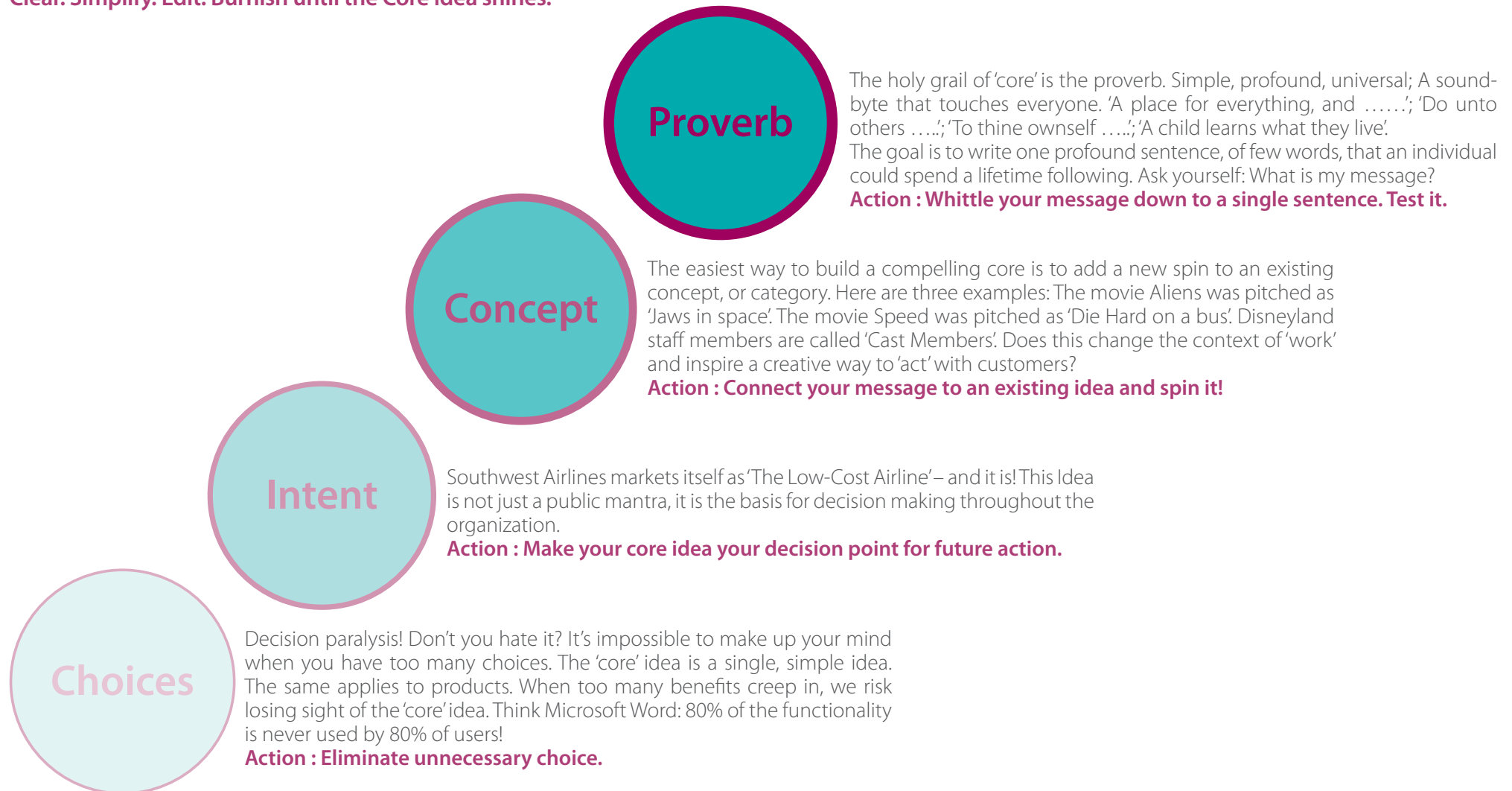
Shared Ideas are the building blocks of Life; sound Ideas are the corner stones of our Economy; Sticky Ideas are the mortar of your economic SUCCEs.

What's your Rome? What's your big Idea – every day, everywhere - worthy of immortality?



RAP1: Simple - tell me the core

The core idea is a single idea, not multiple ideas. Repeat this after me: The core idea is a single idea. Did you get that? Be an elegant designer and cut-away until you're left with just the pure Idea; delete until there is nothing left to take away. Clear. Simplify. Edit. Burnish until the Core Idea shines.





Huh? Surprise!

Have I got your attention? That's the point. You have to 'make enough of a change for people to notice' in order to grab their attention.

As a basic survival mechanism, our brain predicts what is likely to happen. That way we can switch off and relax. Phew! No man-eating tigers around here. Whack! Didn't see that coming.

The simplest way to get your audience's attention – and the basis of good humour – is to confirm the pattern your audience expects and then, break that pattern.

Action : Surprise your audience!

How am I going to keep you interested? Did you know that authors write thrillers backwards? The reason they do that is... Gap Theory. Gap Theory states that curiosity and mystery are aroused when we provide an incomplete picture; our brains go crazy to fill in the gaps.

We love mysteries because we're curious monkeys; we simply want to know what will happen next. We stay engaged to find out all the bits and bobs so that we can complete the picture.

When our understanding is complete we close the loop and then we're able to relax again. Writing a thriller is like subjecting your audience to Chinese Water Torture... drip, drip, drip, drip, drip. The author drip feeds his audience to keep them engaged.

Lead your audience forward; unsure of what's coming next; confused about what's important right now. Then, when all is revealed, they can look back with hindsight and connect all the dots. The writer, or presenter, who keeps his audience interested during the event; and leaves them relaxed and satisfied, is truly a magician. Either that, or, he's using the Brothers Heath's SUCCEsS system to triage his Ideas.

Action: Add intrigue, create a gap and fill it!

RAP2: SEXPECTED - grab my attention

Can you find the important message on this page? Read RAP2 to find it.

RAP3: Concrete - tickle me Elmo

Make your ideas tangible, sensory and concrete. To make them sensory simply means to make sure that the core message tickles ALL the senses of your audience (be it one person or 10001 people). A concrete Idea is: visually clear and sharp, rings true, has rhythm and movement, tastes and smells good (where appropriate – we don't want you eating up the Strategic Plan for smoko) and, makes sure that your audience can get a handle on it. In order to promote transparency, share your idea and coordinate action. An easy and effective strategy is to make your Idea: tangible, sensory and concrete.



Universal Language

What's your favourite fable? The Tortoise and the Hare? The Boy Who Cried Wolf? The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg?

Aesop's Fables have endured for several thousand years because each one demonstrates a profound truth about human nature. They take a single concept and wrap it up in a simple concrete story.

Action : Don't dumb down your 'core' Idea; simply find a universal language to express it.

Everyday Life

Did you like maths at school? The key to basic maths is to translate it into day-to-day life examples to give it meaning and relevance. Math is specific.

Day-to-day human life is about specific people doing specific things. Be specific with your message.

Action : Take your concepts and put them into the context of everyday life. Meet 'Joe the Plumber' where he's at.

Make Sense

We experience the world through our senses. We see it, feel it, hear it, taste it, and, smell it in order to make sense of ourselves, others and existence.

Action : Turn your message into a sensory experience so that first you, and then others, can make sense of it.

Visual Metaphor ●

If a picture's worth a thousand words, then a visual metaphor might be the concrete strength that gives your message the weight it deserves.

Action : Create a picture that captures your message.

RAP4: credible - help me believe

Do you believe me? Do you believe my story? Do you believe my idea? You need credibility to be believed. Internal credibility is inseparable from your message. You build it in as you make up your story; you cannot add it later! External Credibility is like icing you add to your message. It's the 'who' you get later to validate your message and spread the word.

external Authorities

Celebrity advertisements are everywhere because they work. When we see people we want to be like we look at what they endorse more favourably.

Action : Who would you choose if you could?

external Anti-Authorities

Anti-authorities are those that have been there and done that. A dentist selling toothpaste is credible because she knows about these things.

Action : Who's lived your message before?

internal Specific & Local

Which of these two bits of gossip pique your interest? "There was a car crash in your area this morning." Or, "There was a car crash, outside the school on City Road, at 8:03 this morning, between a spunky little yellow Honda and a brutish, early-model blue Ford." Do you feel like an eyewitness to the second 'accident'? Did you have all the details that you needed to easily create a picture - in your mind - of that bully Ford harassing the cute little Honda?

Action : Make your message more credible by making it seem more real. Use vivid, local, specific and detailed examples.

internal Make it Testable

Give people a real opportunity to actively test your Idea. Foodies do this by giving away free samples. (C'mon, you know you've cued at a trade show or in the supermarket to sample a tinsey morsel you wouldn't normally bother with!). Experience can validate an Idea immediately. The reason is that you can make up your own mind about it's merit. After all, aren't you the most credible person you know?!

Action: Design your message so your audience can test it out for themselves: Right here, right now!

internal The Sinatra Test

In his classic, ever-green hit "New York, New York" (now there's an Idea), Frankie's chorus declares: "If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere" (yep, now you're singing!). That's the kind of credibility you want for your message. Barack Obama's Strategic Planning team nailed it when they decided to go with the hot sustainable trend of digital social networking. If social networking can win Barack Obama the first digital US Presidency then it'll work everywhere!

Action : Conduct the Sinatra Test on every Idea before you release it.

internal Relate Statistics

Statistics, magistics, ballistics! Statistics are not about the numbers. In fact, the less we rely on the numbers the better the message will be remembered. Instead, focus on 'relationship' to build meaning and credibility.

Shark attacks gain notoriety because of the vivid imagery highlighted by the media – movies, photos and TV. Emotional! Yet, the reality, is you're more likely to be killed by Skippy than by a shark. Skippy, that cheeky kangaroo is more dangerous than the evil shark in Jaws! You're more likely to die in a confrontation or collision with a kangaroo than be eaten by a shark.

Action : Relate your stats to my everyday experience, and the things I already know about.

RAP5: Emotional - make me care

The old sales adage suggests we don't buy rationally, we buy emotional. Your goal in designing your message is to get your audience to care enough to take action. The key is to appeal to something they care about.

One at a Time

Mother Teresa once said, "If I look at the mass, I will never act. If I look at the one, I will." When it comes to emotional appeal and empathy for your message, **focus on the individual**, not the group.

World Vision is one organization that has learnt this well. They invite individuals to sponsor individual children, not solve all of Africa's woes.

Action : Break your message down so that it relates to the individual and not an anonymous corporation or group.

Associate, or not

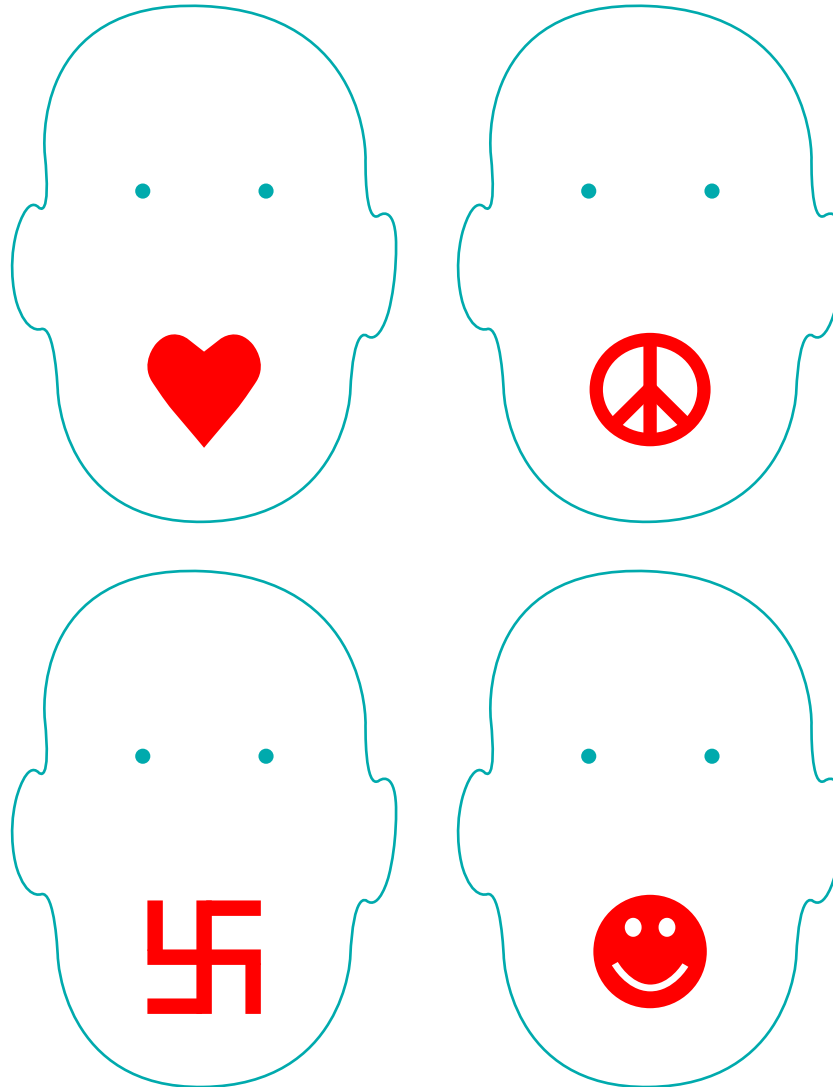
The goal is not simply to stir emotions. Ideally you want to inspire your audience to care. When they care, they're more likely to take action.

The good news is we don't always need to start from scratch. We can simply **connect** our message to an existing emotion. Every body loves a puppy...

What does your audience already care about?

Alternatively, **break the association** and put a different spin on an existing association. In an era of individuals and 'bad sportsmanship'; it might be time to chunk up to a bigger cause and 'honour the game' instead.

Action : Connect to an existing association, then strengthen the bond or break it.



Appeal to Self-Interest

It's easy to appeal to the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs: the physical needs and, the need for security. Research shows we address these needs simultaneously, not in a logical sequence.

This means it can be more effective to appeal to the higher levels of transcendence (to help others realize their potential) or, self-actualization (to realize our own potential).

The most powerful self-interest is one created by ourselves. You can tap into this by telling a story so your listeners can imagine themselves in action.

Action : Identify something your audience wants and show them how they can use your message.

Appeal to Identity

Whilst Self-Interest shapes what we pay attention to, Group-Interest is more likely to determine our actions.

Group-Interest is 'people like me' or people 'who I would like to be'. National pride is one group we like to part of, sport stars are other groups of people we'd like to be like.

Appealing to Group-Interest asks some big questions. Who am I? What kind of situation is this? What do people like me do in this situation?

Action : Identify who your audience would like to be like. Appeal to this.

RAP6: Stories - inspire me to act

There's no such thing as a passive audience. They're just not engaged. And if that's the case, then you might want to pull out a story to illustrate your point. Stories are part entertainment and part instruction. They simulate real situations and provide the inspiration to give people the energy they need to act.

Suck on a Story Today

Can you imagine what it's like to suck on a lemon? Are you salivating yet? A good story is like sucking on a visualized lemon. It engages us as if we are doing the actual activity. Whilst the pop psyche gurus may suggest we focus on visualizing the end result of our challenge, research shows a better way. Studies show that we perform at our best when we visualize and simulate how the situation in front of us unfolds.

The key is working through the process that leads to success, not the final moment when we cross the finish line. The power of stories lies in their ability to lead us through a process. They can put us at the scene of the crime, let us experience the emotions of the eyewitness and work through the clues like a detective and judge our way forward. Listening to a story may not be as good as doing the real thing and they're the next best thing.

SIMULATION : Tell people how to act

3 Little Stories

Once upon a time, there were three little stories...

The first story was about **challenge**. Remember the last time you faced those insurmountable odds? It was an adverse situation. It was a struggle and it required great effort. Thankfully you did what it took. You thought and behaved differently to overcome those obstacles that are now behind you.

Action : Create a challenge story.

The second story was about **connection**. It was about a person just like you who bridged the gap and building a relationship seemed impossible at first. You had to give up your thoughts about who you perceived that other person might be, and, what they might think of you. You broke down that impassable barrier and your Good Samaritan act is now rewarded by your new relationship.

Action : Create a connection story.

The third story was about **creation**. It was about a time when you were stuck and couldn't find the answer you needed. Then, something shifted, you engaged in a new way and discovered a different perception on things. Your discovery, your invention, your mental breakthrough changed your world. Now you're in a new place, with a new solution, and a new future to look forward to.

Action : Create a creation story.

What do you mean?

What inspires one person may not inspire another. Stories that touch the human spirit enable each one to generate their own meaning and create their own openings for action. Leave your meaningless slogans on your desktop and let your listeners inspire themselves into action.

Action Plan: Make it TWIST

Grab your idea and TWIST it through this process... Practise regularly and build your flexibility, freedom, and fluency in how to make your ideas stick.

1 What's Your Idea?

Write down your macro/micro idea here...

2 The 'Will It Stick' Test

TWIST your idea here... Circle the strengths and weaknesses of your current idea.

Is it Simple?	Yes	No
Is it Unexpected?	Yes	No
Is it Concrete?	Yes	No
Is it Credible?	Yes	No
Is it Emotional?	Yes	No
Is it a Story?	Yes	No

3 Make It Stick

Work through this checklist to stick your idea. Then do another TWIST, and repeat until satisfied.

- Make it Simple**
- What's the essence, the core of your idea? Lead with that.
 - What are the 3-4 key words that describe your idea?
 - How is your idea like something else? Link to an existing concept or category.

- Make it Unexpected**
- Identify the current thinking pattern of your audience. Now, break the pattern.
 - Ask a significant question or pose a challenge for your audience to solve.
 - Highlight a missing or counter-intuitive piece of knowledge.

- Make it Concrete**
- Describe your idea in sensory terms. What do you see, hear, feel, taste, touch...
 - How can you put your idea into an everyday experience?
 - Name and describe specific examples of your idea in the real world.

- Make it Credible**
- Link your idea to an external authority or anti-authority.
 - Use statistics to relate your idea to everyday situations.
 - Provide a way for your audience to immediately validate your idea.

- Make it Emotional**
- What does your audience already care about? Connect your idea to this.
 - Create a rational self-interest by showing how your audience can use your idea.
 - Who would your audience like to become? Appeal to this.

- Make it a Story**
- Tell people how to act or use your idea.
 - Visualize the process of how your idea is put to good use.
 - Describe in detail a specific situation where your idea could be applied.

More info...



About the Author

Hi folks! Thanks for reading **Book Rapper**. I think we've all got our own special genius. Mine is to take a whole bunch of information and distil it into some simple yet co-ordinated pattern. I used to be an architect. And, for me, tracking trends and working out how they fit together is just like designing a building.

Cheers, Geoff (McDonald)



About Book Rapper

DIY : This document is our 'DIY' solution. We suggest the actions you could take and you personalize them to your situation.

Custom : We also design custom solutions for your unique situation.

Delivery : This can be delivered in a variety of ways depending upon what you need. This might be one-on-one coaching or mentoring, or group events such as keynote presentations, facilitating strategic planning meetings or creating projects to achieve specific outcomes.

Home Base : We're based in Melbourne, Australia and with the clever use of technology we can virtually be anywhere.



Email Me...

Share your results, feedback, thoughts, questions, suggestions, etc. And, naturally, email if you want help designing your personal implementation.

Geoff@BookRapper.com



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