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Book Review: Made to Stick, by Chip and Dan Heath

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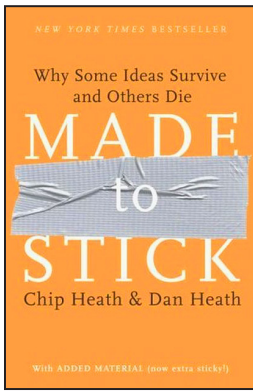
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Made to Stick

By: Chip Heath and Dan Heath

Review by Danielle Adams

Many of us have been faced with the challenge of how to make a school presentation interesting and memorable. Professors face this same challenge every day in trying to make lectures notable. In these and other cases, it's easy to succumb to the belief that some topics are simply forgettable, and always will be.

Chip and Dan Heath tackle this challenge and teach readers how to make any idea "sticky" in their book *Made to Stick*. They do this by using the six principles of the mnemonic "SUCCEsS." While some of the examples may seem outdated (the book was written in 2007), the principles are still relevant today.

Simplicity: When concepts are boiled down to the most important principles, they are easier to remember. Rather than a complicated and comprehensive strategy, Southwest Airlines has an extremely simple approach: "THE low-fare airline."

Unexpectedness: This principle focuses not only on how to get people's attention, but how to keep it. From the Enclave minivan ad to the wolves-attacking-the-marching-band ad of the 2000 Superbowl, unexpectedness can have surprising durability.

Concreteness: Making an abstract idea concrete allows listeners to put the idea into a context they understand. Explaining a pomelo as a large citrus

fruit with a firm yet squishy rind is much harder to understand than simply saying a pomelo is like an oversized grapefruit. By using a concrete example that most people will understand, it is easier to comprehend the abstract idea.

Credibility: People remember things when a reliable source or person is attached to it, and the source doesn't have to be famous. Everyone remembers "The Truth" anti-smoking campaign because of Pam Laffin, a former chain smoker whose heartfelt admonition to stop smoking was credible because of her own experience.

Emotion: Instead of a basic list of what causes donations support, charities often have a photo and an anecdote of someone who is personally affected by charitable donations. Seeing a face and hearing a story elicits an emotional response that potential donors aren't likely to forget.

Stories: As the Heaths write, "Stories are like flight simulators for the brain." When a person hears a story, she is more able to put herself in the context of what is going on, making it a more personal experience and therefore more memorable.

Chip and Dan also bring light to concepts that help or hinder messages from being communicated effectively: notions like the Curse of Knowledge, Commander's Intent, the Sinatra Test, and several others. They dig into why some ad campaigns like "The Truth" anti-smoking campaign mentioned above or the "Mean Joe" Coca-Cola are so memorable while others fall flat.

The "clinics" at the end of each chapter provide specific examples of how to apply these principles, making the book not only a fascinating and quick read, but also a convenient reference for future presentations.

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