




Book Review - Contagious: Why Things Catch On

Christy Swatling

Brigham Young University, noname7@byu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/marriottstudentreview>

 Part of the [Accounting Commons](#), [Business Administration, Management, and Operations Commons](#), [Business and Corporate Communications Commons](#), and the [Entrepreneurial and Small Business Operations Commons](#)

Marriott Student Review is a student journal created and published as a project for the Writing for Business Communications course at Brigham Young University (BYU). The views expressed in Marriott Student Review are not necessarily endorsed by BYU or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Recommended Citation

Swatling, Christy () "Book Review - Contagious: Why Things Catch On," *Marriott Student Review*. Vol. 4 : Iss. 1 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/marriottstudentreview/vol4/iss1/8>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Marriott Student Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Marriott
Student

Book Review

“But although quality, price, and advertising contribute to products and ideas being successful, they don’t explain the whole story.”

In his New York Times Bestseller, *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*, Jonah Berger delves into what makes products and ideas go viral. Through hundreds of intriguing and sometimes jaw-dropping stories, Berger identifies six key components to make everything—from a YouTube video to a new tech gadget—become contagious.

Step #1: Social Currency

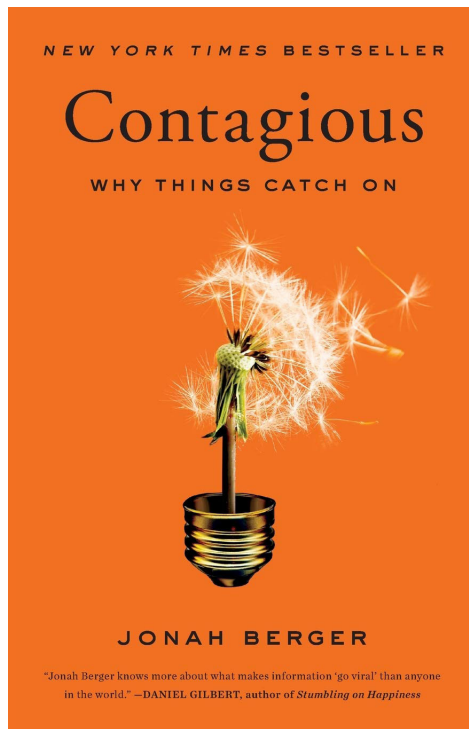
People want to share products that make them look cool, smart, and trendy. Did you know there’s a restaurant in Philadelphia that sells a \$120 Philly cheesesteak? Did you know that a kangaroo can’t walk backward? Turn your product into social currency by making it, and those who talk about it, appear remarkable (interesting, exclusive, distinctive).

Step #2: Triggers

Triggers are stimuli that make people think about a related product or idea: peanut butter and jelly, salt and pepper, cats and dogs. People tend to talk about what comes to mind, so if you can create natural triggers that lead people to think about your product, more people will talk about it.

Step #3: Emotion

When we care, we share. Contagious content evokes people to feel a strong emotion: awe, anger, excitement, amusement, sadness. When promoting a product, you need to evoke the right emotions for your purposes. The 2009 viral video “United Breaks Guitars” invoked



Contagious: Why Things Catch On By Jonah Berger Review by Christy Swatling

anger in thousands of disgruntled United (and non-United) patrons around the world. On the other end of the emotion spectrum, a cute video of a cat chasing a laser pointer drives people to feel amused and share with their friends.

Step #4: Public

Can people using your product be seen doing so, and do they want to be seen? If the answer is yes, then people will likely want to imitate this behavior. Remember how popular the yellow Nike Livestrong bracelets were? The public value drives more people to try out your product.

Step #5: Practical Value

People love to help those around them, so if you can show them how your product will save them time, save them money or improve their life, they are more likely to share it. How-to videos and life hack videos go viral because people enjoy passing on useful information.

Step #6: Stories

In order for people to want to share your product, it must be wrapped up in a story. Humankind has thrived on storytelling since the dawn of time. Make your product a vital part of the story and people won’t be able to resist sharing it.

In this book, Jonah Berger provides great insight into how to make a product break through the clutter and become contagious. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants a straightforward and enlightening look at the world of marketing and psychology. 📖