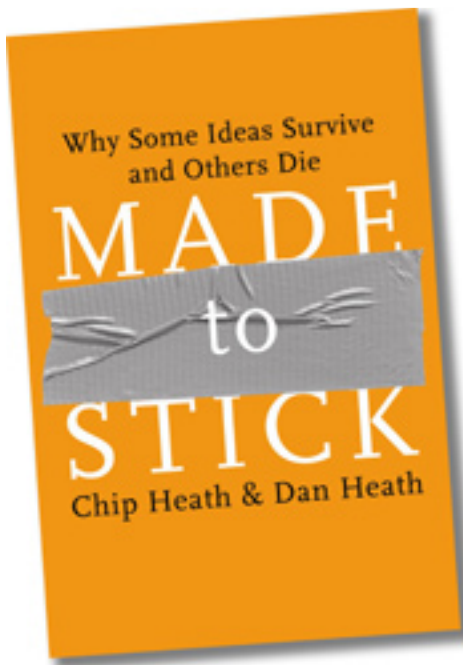


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**BONUS**  
question  
inside!



## How do you spell **SUCCESS?**

*Chip and Dan Heath Share Secrets of Memorable Ideas  
Review and Analysis by Cam Beck, ChaosScenario.com*

Simplicity

Unexpectedness

Concreteness

Credibility

Emotional

Stories

The authors of *Made to Stick* claim they consider it a companion piece to *The Tipping Point*, but my suggestion is this:

*If you haven't read either and only have time to read one, read Made to Stick.*

Malcom Gladwell is a good writer, but the brothers Heath are excellent teachers.

They want to teach you the same tools they use constantly throughout their book.

**Made to Stick links:**

[Book](#)

[Website](#)

[Blog](#)

## Simplicity

# Boil it Down to Just One Thing

The first quality of a sticky message is simplicity. One example they used is the gruff wisdom of Curly (Jack Palance) from *City Slickers*, who shared the secret to a happy life with city-dweller Mitch (Billy Crystal). Curly held up a single finger and told his clueless charge to find one thing that he's passionate about – it doesn't matter what it is – and be about



that one thing. Once Mitch did that, Curly said, it didn't matter what else went on around him. He could tune it out.

In truth, it does matter what that one thing is, but the point is clear: Find what you love, and dedicate yourself to it! Be passionate about it! And don't be afraid that everyone is looking.

In marketing, simplicity just means you've got to boil the central message down to its essence. Discard the happy talk and get to the point. The more your message is about, the less it will be understood.

## Q&A with authors Chip and Dan Heath

### For whom was the book written, and why?

All of us need to make our ideas stick from time to time. There are some people – teachers, ministers, politicians, and of course marketers – whose jobs depend on making ideas stick. Our book was written to help people make that happen.

It's fiendishly difficult to take the light bulb that's in your head and recreate it in the minds of your audience. And that's where the traits of stickiness come in – to refine our most important ideas so that they'll endure.

## Unexpectedness

# Get Their Attention and Keep It



A good example of surprise that the authors use is Jared of Subway. Nobody expected anyone to go from 425 lbs to 180 lbs by eating fast food. So completely did Jared's story obliterate people's perception of the effective ways to lose weight that the process of finding and broadcasting it

had to overcome great bureaucratic hurdles to get the needed permission to use that story in the company's advertising.

Lacking the element of surprise, you can still generate interest by implicitly pointing out gaps in the knowledge of your audience.

The interest isn't built in the punch line, but in how the mystery unfolds. You know something they want to know. Each question leads to another question, and as you ask the question, it makes the audience realize that they, too, want to hear what you have to say about the answer.

That said, it must be a question that has no clear answer, or one that suggests the audience's longstanding beliefs, or schema, will be changed once the answer is revealed.

The challenge is in getting the audience to think about and become engaged with the message. Revealing the unexpected at key intervals will help you do just that.

## Q&A with authors Chip and Dan Heath (continued)

### Why does your book use so many examples of advertising?

Advertising is a pure marketplace of ideas, so it's a great laboratory for studying stickiness. Great ad campaigns, like Wendy's "Where's the Beef?", thrive

on the principles of stickiness. Subway's Jared campaign, for instance, perfectly captures the power of a story to make an idea stick.

## Concreteness

# Hit Your Audience with a TON OF BRICKS

Concreteness is a particularly useful principle for strategists, experience designers, or anyone charged with developing and presenting abstract information to a client, if they expect the client to remember the information later. Statistics are abstract, but necessary. How can you make your presentation of the statistics memorable and convincing?

When something can be touched, seen, tasted, or smelled, it meets the criteria for being concrete. “The size of a basketball to the size of a tennis ball” is concrete. The difference in sizes between Earth and its moon is not.

Concreteness is the principle that motivates breaking down abstractions to more tangible, relevant forms, which are typically easier to digest. Do it correctly on the front end, when you’re presenting strategy for a campaign or website, and you’re less likely to encounter objections about the principles on which the campaign or site are built when the time comes to present something that relies on the audience understanding an abstract concept.



## Q&A with authors Chip and Dan Heath (continued)

### What is the most important lesson from your book that you hope sticks with marketers?

Use concrete, sensory language. Think of urban legends (the man who wakes up in an ice-filled bathtub without kidneys) or fables (Aesop’s The Fox and the Grapes). These ideas etch themselves into our brains because of their sensory hooks.

And this may sound like common sense, and yet it is not instinctive marketing behavior. You only need to visit a couple of web sites to see the wasteland of bland abstractions: World-class customer service! Simplify your life! You can have it all!

## Credibility

# Earning the Trust of Strangers



Genuine experts can add a punch to your idea, but lacking celebrities or experts to endorse your idea, what are the methods to establish credibility, and how do we use this technique for good, not evil?

### Antiauthorities

An antiauthority is one who can bring emotional resonance and detail to an idea, and they can be more effective spokespeople than celebrities or experts. If you're trying to convince people not to smoke, it's more effective to use as your spokesperson a young person who is dying of lung cancer than a

celebrity like, say, Keanu Reeves – or worse, George Burns (who smoked cigars until he died at 100 years old).

### Details

Another interesting finding that the brothers Heath reported on is how irrelevant details can make an idea more convincing, but when confronted with a challenge of presenting an idea to skeptics, our details should be both truthful and more meaningful.

### Human Scale

Large numbers are difficult for humans to digest. The scaling process that we might use to make them more concrete also makes them more credible.

## Q&A with authors Chip and Dan Heath (continued)

### In your book, you make several references to the “Curse of Knowledge.” How can knowledge be a curse, and how can it be overcome?

The Curse of Knowledge is the arch-villain in our book. The Curse of Knowledge says that once we know something, it becomes hard for us to imagine what it was like not to know it. And that, in turn, makes us communicate to others like speakers of a foreign language. We forget to translate. Think of the IT guy in the office who can't give you a clear answer to

something. He talks in jargon and abstractions that you can't follow. And we're all the IT guy in our areas of expertise – our knowledge complicates our communication. You can avoid the Curse of Knowledge by using the principles of stickiness. The power of a sticky idea is precisely that it crosses boundaries of knowledge, experience, even culture.

## Emotional

# Yank Their Heartstrings AND KEEP PULLING

When you run into a friend who is truly passionate about a product, oftentimes he will tell you about all the wonderful features that make it the coolest thing. However, one question he forgot to answer is why you should even care.

People don't want features. They want solutions. They have problems that need to be solved. They need to be motivated. They want to be inspired.

Once you understand this, your task is boiled down to discovering which need you must fulfill in order to get the best

mileage. "Milk. It does a body good," gets transformed to the entire "got milk?" television campaign, which at its core is about recognizing that the emotion engendered when you want milk but can't get it is far more powerful than extolling the individual physical benefits of drinking it.

Interestingly, in print, the "got milk?" campaign is primarily about a different human need – association. It relies on the audience's assumption that cool, pretty, or interesting people like to drink milk, and if they want to be like those people, they should drink milk, too.

## Q&A with authors Chip and Dan Heath (continued)

**In your interview with U.S. News and World Report, you called PowerPoint presentations the "kryptonite of sticky ideas." What is the alternative?**

When we're talking, or making presentations, we sprinkle in stories and anecdotes and specific examples. We treat them like garnish. And the bulk of our presentation consists of "high-level" talking points, which are almost always abstractions. PowerPoint feeds this tendency by giving us little easy-to-

use bullets. And what do you put after a bullet? Certainly not a story.

But stories and examples aren't garnish, they're the entrée. Most people communicate with, say, 3 parts exposition to 1 part story. That's exactly backwards. Don't let PowerPoint seduce you into meaninglessness.



## Stories

# Don't Take It to the Dance UNLESS YOU DRESS IT UP

For thousands of years, we have used the power of stories to give our children instructions on morality. So painless is this process that children of a certain age practically beg for us to read them these stories at bedtime.

To a bright-eyed five-year-old, the story of “The Boy Who Cried Wolf,” is far more effective at teaching the personal and public value of telling the truth than an actual ethical treatise on the virtues of honesty.

The power that stories have over us is not a phenomenon limited to children. Moral lectures and attributes that need to be

memorized by rote tend to fall on deaf ears. By contrast, stories can both tell us how to act and motivate us to take the correct action.

Relevant stories tend to stick with us because in hearing one, we mentally put ourselves in the position of the protagonist. Stories give us “mental practice.”

To underscore this point, the authors cited studies that showed “mental practice alone produced about two thirds of the benefits of actual physical practice.” This revelation is of great benefit to accordion players who have irritable roommates. With power like that, world peace can't be far behind.

## Q&A with authors Chip and Dan Heath



**BONUS**  
question

### Why are some of Aesop's fables stickier than others?

Aesop's fables are all concrete – they concern people and animals doing things you can easily visualize. But some of the fables get some extra punch from unexpectedness, which is one of the traits of stickiness. For instance, think about the Tortoise and the Hare and the surprise ending (The pokey one wins the race!). Others lack this punch and are less sticky because of it. For example,

I doubt you'd know the fable “The Cat and the Mice.” The cat eats some mice, which makes the rest of the mice scurry into their hole to hide. The cat tries to lure them out by playing dead, but they don't buy it. That's it. Doesn't really have the same zing, does it? If you use more of the principles of sticky ideas your idea is more likely to endure, even if you're a professional like Aesop.

# A Word of Caution

I was very pleased for the opportunity to read and review Chip and Dan Heath's excellent book. I can honestly say that it has changed the way I look at communication and education, which is high praise coming from a natural skeptic. I am now a believer in the potential effectiveness of the tools, which is why everyone – marketers and nonmarketers alike – needs to read this book.

Since there is no guarantee the tools described here will be used for the benefit of objectively good things, it's important to recognize when a

friend, marketer, teacher, scientist, or politician is using them. That way, you will at least be a little skeptical the next time someone tries to yank your chain.

If you're looking to promote something good or beneficial, you would serve your cause well to use the SUCCEsS checklist taught in *Made to Stick*.

If you intend to promote or advance something bad, please skip this book and just pick up Aesop's Fables. That guy rocks.

# Join the Conversation

The MarketingProfs Book Club is currently featuring *Made to Stick*. The segment kicks-off May 15th and online discussions begin on June 12th.

Here's how to participate:

## 1. Sign Up... You Could Get a Free Book ([Learn More](#))

To join the MarketingProfs Book Club, [click here](#).

## 2. Read the Book

Very little of your time will be better spent this year.

## 3. Group Review

Interact with the authors as well as other readers. Ask questions and even launch your own discussions! Just [go here](#) to learn more (and [go here](#) to sign up).



## Reviewer Information

Cam Beck  
Click Here, Inc.  
8750 N. Central Expwy., Suite 1200  
Dallas, TX 75231  
[cbeck@clickhere.com](mailto:cbeck@clickhere.com)

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