The Tipping Point Summary
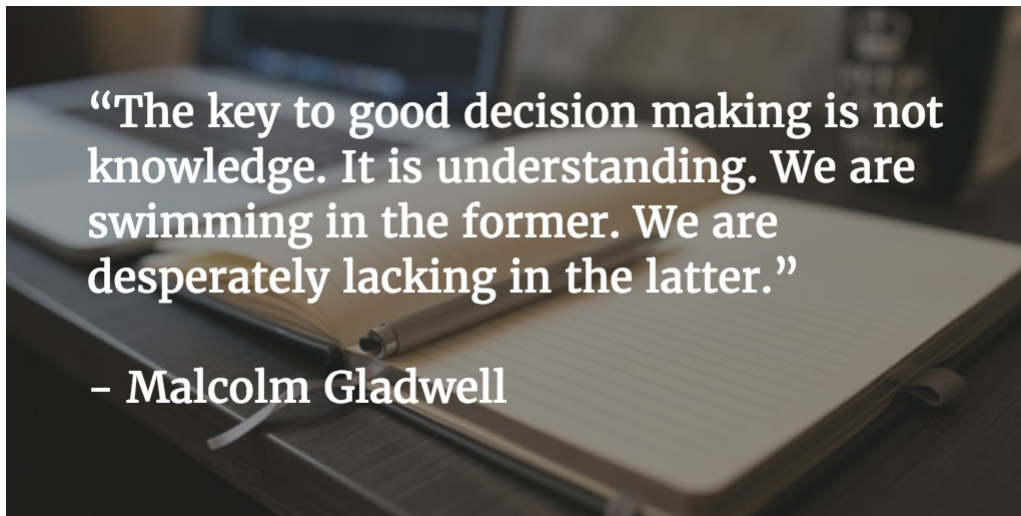
1-Sentence-Summary: _The Tipping Point_ explains how ideas spread like epidemics and which few elements need to come together to help an idea reach the point of critical mass, where its viral effect becomes unstoppable.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:

> "The key to good decision making is not knowledge. It is understanding. We are swimming in the former. We are desperately lacking in the latter."
>
> – Malcolm Gladwell

Malcolm Gladwell is your friendly, Canadian journalist next door. Much more than that, he's taken a massive interest in science over the years, and you might know him from a variety of his great talks, books, and ideas.

I originally "bumped into him" through his first TED talk about spaghetti sauce. Similar to Barry Schwartz's Paradox of Choice, Gladwell reveals interesting findings about happiness and choice, and how the two are related (or not).

The Tipping Point is his debut book, and it was a massive hit – not least due to the value it created for businesses and marketers, who now had the first sketch of a blueprint on how to promote their ideas better.

Here are the 3 lessons from the book that will help you spread your own ideas:

1. Once an idea reaches the tipping point, it spreads like fire.
2. Three kinds of people are responsible for getting ideas to tip.
3. Without stickiness, no idea will ever tip.

Ready to infect the masses with your idea? Let's roll!

Lesson 1: An idea spreads like fire once it reaches the tipping point.

Katniss said it pretty clearly: "Fire is catching."

So are ideas.

But in order to spread like fire among dry bushes, an idea first has to reach what Gladwell calls the tipping point.

It's the point of critical mass, where your idea goes from interesting to a few to must-have for everyone.

Take Instagram for example. Yes, they had a lot of growth early on – but it was still steady growth. There was a definite moment though, in February 2012, when all of a sudden, the entire world seemed to need an account.

It's in this exact moment that Instagram's user growth curve shoots up meteorically and it becomes the fastest growing social network of all time.

Don't think virality is limited to the internet though – this phenomenon predates the web. In 1984, Sharp came out with the first affordable fax machine for people at home and sold a solid 80,000 units in the first year.

Sales rose steadily, but in 1987 completely exploded – by 1990 over 5 million fax machines were in use in US homes.

Why?

In 1987, the point was hit when finally enough people owned a fax, so it made sense for the rest of the world to get one too.

Lesson 2: Three kinds of people are responsible for getting ideas to tip.

Why then, do some ideas go big and beyond, and others just never click?

Pareto's Law is once again at play here, where roughly 20% of the "carriers" cause 80% of the infections with an idea.

Gladwell specifically points out three kinds of people that turn ideas into epidemics:

1. **Connectors** – they have a massive social network, with many acquaintances and allow ideas to spread from one social group to the next.
2. **Salesmen** – the boast about ideas they love and their incredibly positive energy is contagious.
3. **Mavens** – they hoard information, in order to be a source of great tips to their network, the people of which they greatly influence with their advice.

If you want your idea to go viral, getting it in the hands of a few of these key players is crucial to hit critical mass.

But...

Lesson 3: If your idea isn't sticky, it'll never tip.

It doesn't matter how many influencers you get to vouch for your idea, or how many testimonials you can collect for the front page of your book – if your book is bad, it'll never reach the masses.

Gladwell calls this **the stickiness factor**. It answers the question: **"Is your idea memorable enough to make people take action?"**

The concept of stickiness was first put to a proper scientific test by the creators of <u>Sesame Street</u> in the late 1960s.

When testing the show by observing children watching it, they noticed children were quite selective about what they paid attention to, for example, toys on the floor or the show on TV.

However, that didn't influence what they'd remember – the quality of the content did. The kids could only give a few select looks to an educational scene about how to spell the word "cat", yet still remember the lesson.

That meant unlike adults, children paid attention to TV in order to learn and understand, not to be entertained. As a result, the team engineered the entire show around children's attention, monitoring it meticulously, which ultimately led to the format the show is still in today – humans interacting with fantasy creatures.

The originally planned format, to have puppet scenes separate from human scenes, failed to grab children's attention and thus, their minds.

Even though this is the last lesson, it's really the first point.

<u>If you want something viral, you can't think about making something viral.</u>

Just make something so great, one person who sees it can't live without sharing it.

Then, and only then, should you start caring about the tipping point.

The Tipping Point Review

The Tipping Point was given to me by an American exchange student during my internship at BMW. She'd finished it and wanted to pass it on. Gladwell's writing is gripping, he weaves stories and tales and hides baffling discoveries inside them.

I remember distinctly sitting in my armchair at my parents' house, feeling completely awestruck at the fact that I indeed just yawned 3 times, just because, as Gladwell predicted, I'd read a section about yawning. That's the kind of power his writing holds.

The summary will give you the nuts and bolts, but to witness Gladwell's magic writing first hand, you have to get the book.

What else can you learn from the blinks?

- What hush puppies are and why they spread like wildfire in the 90's
- How ideas are indeed similar to diseases
- Why it's probably the fault of a single person that AIDS spread in the US
- The number of people you have to get through to reach anyone in the world
- More about salesmen and mavens
- How Winston became the most popular cigarette brand in the US
- Two experiments that showed how shockingly strong we adapt to external circumstances
- What the rule of 150 is

Who would I recommend The Tipping Point summary to?

The 17 year old blogger who's desperately hoping for a viral hit, the 47 year old hobby writer with lots of connections, who wants to learn how to use them better, and anyone who has an idea worth spreading.

Learn more about the author

Read the full book summary on Blinkist

Get the book on Amazon