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## Step One: The Hook

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The very first step in The Six Appeal Process is called THE HOOK.

Surely you can picture a fishing hook, how it's designed to catch the mouth of a fish and latch on, and that's precisely what an emotional hook is designed to do, too:

*Catch a reader's attention and LATCH ON.*

With over 400 million tweets sent daily and 4.75 billion pieces of content shared on Facebook every day (holy maloney, right?), and only .5 seconds for someone to decide if they're going to stay on your website or leave, hooking someone isn't as easy as it once was. In the online landscape, where there's more opportunity than ever, there's also more noise than ever. So the only shot you have? Is to use your opening words as a weapon, and make sure the first thing anyone reads guarantees one thing: **That they'll read more.**

The hook isn't just a headline; it's a theme. A message. A unifying idea that's going to help shape your brand, your message and your idea—and give everything else you write some cohesion.

It's a statement, or a series of statements, that help make surprising new connections in the minds of readers, and serve as your thesis statement, so to speak. The underbelly of your work. Your message, distilled into a bundle of brilliance.

**Brains love surprises.**

They're hardwired to pay attention because to the brain, a surprise means that you weren't prepared for something. And if you weren't prepared for something, *then you must not know*

*something*. So your brain kicks into high gear and sends your attention span reeling for more.

Translation: Your hook doesn't need to shock and awe, but it should contain an element of unexpected. Because surprise happens when a human's guessing mechanism fails.

## *Your job is to break the pattern.*

How do you do that?

One way: *Violate the reader.*

Not like THAT. But violate in the sense that you completely throw off the schema of what their brain is automatically guessing is going to come next in a line, a sentence, a paragraph.

When you help others view everyday or complex concepts in a new light, it's like they're seeing things for the first time, like a child.

And as such, *it gives them a reason to pay attention to it.* **This is key.**

Example hook statements:

So you've got a great business.  
Maybe even one of the best out there.  
**Who cares?**

Happiness isn't earned, given or taken.  
**It's defined.**

Design isn't just pretty.  
**It's POWER.**

Break up with paper.  
**Honeymoon with efficiency.**

So what I want you to do in this first step is simple: Take whatever you're selling, whether it's a product, a service, your entire brand, or yourself, and come up with one statement or series of statements, a HOOK, if you will, designed to violate your target's expectations. (You can use the following prompt to help.)

To successfully execute, you need to consider two things:

- 1 **In order to violate expectations, you've got to know what the expectations are.**

Say you're writing a novel, even, and you've got to come up with a jacket description that's emotionally engaging. First consider your story and what's normal about it. Is it a story about a girl who graduates college, hates corporate America, and decides to do something about it? Great. *But who cares?* That's nothing new. We've seen it coming and going. That isn't to say we can't tell that story, though. We merely need to determine how to take that same story, and develop a fresh approach to communicating it—and find a way to violate what we expect comes next. (As long as you aren't making it up, of course. In other words, you can't fabricate lies just for the sake of being surprising. You can only do that when talking to

your ex-boyfriend.)

- 2 **Don't forget the expectations you violate should be those of your target reader. Not your own.**

This is particularly relevant when we've got professionals and well-meaning folks who know their stuff so well, that they use a bunch of industry jargon, either because they're so used to their topic that they forget not everybody knows what they're talking about, OR, because they're secretly competing with their peers and are worried about making the wrong right impression.

(Hint: You don't care what your peers think; your goal is to write for the person who's going to pull money out of their pocket and give it to you.) Therefore, when you're considering how you can gracefully