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What makes ideas memorable - Communication and Design Written Document 0

The Google Photos presentation was effective in its memorability. It utilised many ‘made to stick’ concepts such as being simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, emotional and it was built around a story[1]. This document discusses the story, surprise and concrete aspects.

Anil Sabharwal’s presentation opened with a simple familiar tale about his daughter’s graduation and how he would theoretically use Google Photos to store his pictures of his precious memories[2]. Through this, we can imagine ourselves storing our most important memories with Google Photos the way he does in the story. “Psychologists define schema as a collection of generic properties of a concept or category. Schemas consist of lots of prerecorded information stored in our memories.”[1, p.41] A new 'hook' is created between our schema of family and our currently forming schema of Google Photos. This new mental link makes us unconsciously associate the product with all the positive schemas and emotions associated with family. The presenter's story consisted of a list of seemingly unrelated events that helped simplify the presentation by creating a linear pathway for the audience to follow along. Despite this, the tale did not do much to help the memorability or the 'stickiness' of the presentation. The story itself was not challenging, creative or connecting and therefore not as effective as it potentially could have been.

The concreteness of the presentation helps to persuade potential users to use the system. Instead of abstractly explaining how Google Photos works, the audience is shown through a visual demonstration. “The concrete images evoked . . . allowed it’s message to persist.”[1, p.71] This gives the audience a more concrete image that the system not only works but is easy to use. The visual aid lets the audience experience Google Photos first hand. A first hand experience is almost always a more reliable source of information to a potential customer than a salesman-figure's pitch. This effective use of a concrete demonstration results in the audience being more likely to use Google Photos as the persuasive presenter intended.

“You can now backup and store unlimited, high quality photos and videos for free.”[2] The unexpected, and most memorable, element of the presentation was that Google Photos would provide free, unlimited storage. “. . . surprise acts as a king of emergency override when we confront something unexpected and our guessing machines fail. Things come to a halt, ongoing activities are interrupted, our attention focuses involuntarily on the event that surprised us.”[1, p.50] The surprise tagline that the presenter wanted everyone in the audience to remember the most was left until the end of the presentation to amplify the ‘sticky’ effect it would have because it was the last thing that was said. The tagline works to surprise the audience in the same way that Nordstrom employees surprise their customers[1]. Letting customers use Google Photos for free seems to put Google at a loss because they do not seem to be profiting from it’s users. This unexpected altruism will be memorable to the audience.

Despite leaving out unwanted technical jargon, the presentation could have been even simpler to increase its general effectiveness. “If you say three things, you don’t say anything.”[1, p.27] The presenter mentioned at the beginning of the presentation that he would cover the three main features of Google Photos. “With Google Photos we built an entirely new experience, from the ground up centered around three big ideas. First a home for all your photos and videos . . . Second, help you organize and bring your moments to life . . . And third, make it easy to share and save what matters.”[2] To improve, Anil could group the features under an umbrella term as not to bombard the audience. The presenter attempted to disguise the fact that he was listing the features of the new product by weaving them into a story about himself, riddled with his photos but unfortunately, the features are emphasised enough to stand out. Audience members likely only remember the surprise ending of the presentation rather than the exact functionalities. By the end of the presentation, the audience had been bombarded with too much information and the technical aspects become background noise compared to most customers’ two favourite words: “free” and “unlimited”[2].

The presentation aims to, and succeeds at, making Google Photos memorable to the audience. It persuades the audience to use the product through concrete examples, emotional stories and an unexpected announcement.

References:

[1]C. Heath and D. Heath, *Made to stick*. New York: Random House, 2007.

[2] Google Developers, "Google I/O 2015 - Keynote", Youtube. May 28th 2015. [Online]. Available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7V-fIGMDsmE. [Accessed: 22- Jan- 2016].