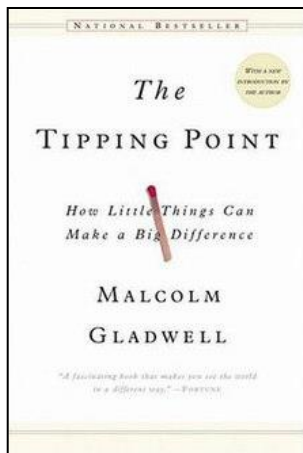


The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference



(From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

The Tipping Point is the debut book _____ Malcolm Gladwell. Gladwell defines a tipping point as "the moment of critical mass, the threshold, the boiling point". The book seeks to explain and describe the "mysterious" sociological changes in everyday life. As Gladwell states: "Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread like viruses do". The examples of such changes in his book include the rise _____ popularity and sales of Hush Puppies shoes in the mid-1990s and the steep drop _____ New York City's crime rate after 1990.

The three rules

Gladwell describes the "three rules of epidemics" (or the three "agents of change") in the tipping points of epidemics.

1 The Law of the Few. As Gladwell states, "The success of any kind of social epidemic is heavily dependent on the involvement of people with a particular [...] set of social gifts". According to Gladwell, economists call this the "80/20 Principle: in any situation roughly 80 percent of the 'work' will be done by 20 percent of the participants" (see Pareto Principle). These people are described in the following ways:

a) *Connectors* are the people in a community who know large numbers of people and who are in the habit of making introductions. A connector is essentially the social equivalent of a computer network hub. They usually know people across an array of social, cultural, professional, and economic circles, and make a habit of introducing people who work or live in different circles.

b) *Mavens* are "information specialists", or "people we rely upon to connect us with new information". They accumulate knowledge, especially about the marketplace, and know how to share it with others. According to Gladwell, Mavens start "word-of-mouth epidemics" due to their knowledge, social skills, and ability to communicate.

c) *Salesmen* are "persuaders", charismatic people with powerful negotiation skills. They tend to have an indefinable trait that goes beyond what they say, which makes others want to agree with them. Gladwell cites several studies about the persuasive implications of non-verbal cues, including a headphone nod study.

2 The Stickiness Factor. The Stickiness Factor refers to the specific content of a message that renders its impact memorable. Popular children's television programs such as *Sesame Street* and *Blue's Clues* pioneered the properties of the stickiness factor, thus enhancing effective retention of educational content as well as entertainment value.

3 The Power of Context Human behavior is sensitive to, and strongly influenced by, its environment. Gladwell explains: "Epidemics are sensitive to the conditions and circumstances of the times and places in which they occur". For example, "zero tolerance" efforts to combat minor crimes such as fare-beating and vandalism of the New York subway led to a decline in more violent crimes citywide. Gladwell describes the bystander effect, and explains how Dunbar's number plays into the tipping point Dunbar's number is the maximum number of individuals in a society or group that someone can have real social relationships with, which Gladwell dubs the "rule of 150."