Summary of Neuro Web Design: What Makes Them Click? By Susan M. Weinschenk

Why do people decide to buy a product online? Register at your Web site? Trust the information you provide? Neuro Web Design applies the research on motivation, decision making, and neuroscience to the design of Web sites. In this summary, you will learn the unconscious reasons for people's actions, how emotions affect decisions, and how to apply the principles of persuasion to design Web sites that encourage users to click.

The brain is complex, and this book explains some of what neuroscientists know about the brain, connect that knowledge to our everyday behavior, and connect it especially to our everyday behavior on the Internet.

Although this isn't a short read, I highly recommend reading the whole book to understand every theory. The book shows amazing stories of researchers that have put the theories to the test. In this summary a have mentioned some of those stories, and I summarized the theories. But to get a full understanding you must read the whole book.

Chapter 1: Designing Web Sites for Persuasion and the Unconscious Mind

On a recent vacation, you broke your digital camera. Now you must buy a new one. You liked the camera you had, but maybe there are better or cheaper ones now? You go online to check out cameras. Which Web site will you go to? Why did you choose that Web site? Will you go to more than one Web site? Will you buy it online after all? We think that we are reasonable, rational people and that our decisions are made by careful thinking. But the reality is that the Web site we pick, what we decide to do while there, and whether we buy or not, are decisions and actions that we make in a largely unconscious way.

When you are done reading this summary, you'll know what that camera Web site could do to grab your attention: how it could talk to your old brain, your mid brain, and your new brain—and thereby make you click

YOU'RE SO SMART YOU HAVE THREE BRAINS

We often talk about the human brain as if it were one large part of our body, but there are distinct parts of the brain that have distinct functions. This book simplifies it all by referring to three different brains:

1. The old brain is concerned with our survival.
2. The mid brain is where emotions are processed. It's what causes you to feel things, and it's the root of a lot of your impulse buying.
3. The new brain, or cortex, is the most recent structure identified. Language processing, speech, reading, playing music, listening to music, thinking thoughts, planning—these are all done with the new brain. It's your new brain that is reading this summary.

What really makes us human is that we have all three. And all three work together. Here's an example. You are driving in your car (old brain is moving muscles, scanning the road, new brain is processing visual data and talking to the old brain so that you stay between the lines), and you are thinking about an argument you had with your brother over the weekend (new brain is remembering the argument, mid brain is reliving the argument emotionally).

THERE'S A LOT GOING ON UP THERE THAT WE DON'T EVEN KNOW ABOUT

Our behavior and our decision-making is even more affected by our old brain and our mid brain than it is by our new brain. This means that we think we make decisions about how to act and what to do consciously, but actually most of our decision-making and behavior is governed by unconscious processing. We can't really separate what we do consciously from the unconscious aspects.

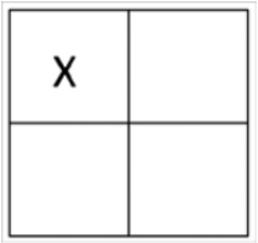
The latest idea is that we are processing information and "thinking" unconsciously all the time. This is why when we are trying to solve a problem and we stop working on it and go to lunch, the solution will suddenly appear as we are munching on our sandwich or driving in the car back to work. Your unconscious was working on the problem, but you weren't aware of it.

Imagine a day without the unconscious. We wouldn't be able to get through five minutes. The estimate from neuroscientists is that our five senses are taking in 11 million pieces of information every second. And how many of those are we processing consciously? A mere 40! So, we need the unconscious to deal with the other 10,999,960 pieces of information each second, or we would be overwhelmed in a matter of seconds.

Our unconscious is a huge efficient shortcut tool, showing us what to pay attention to consciously.

YOUR UNCONSCIOUS IS SMARTER AND FASTER THAN YOUR CONSCIOUS MIND

You're sitting in front of a computer screen that is divided into four quadrants. The experimenter tells you to watch for an X that is going to appear in one of the quadrants and to press one of the four buttons in front of you to indicate which quadrant the X is in.



The participants didn't know it, but there was a complex rule about where the X would appear. The rules were complicated, but participants learned them. That was evident since as they continued, their performance steadily improved—they got faster and faster at pressing the correct buttons.
But not one of the participants could articulate what the rules were. Nor were they aware they were learning rules.
Just when participants were starting to perform well, the rules suddenly changed. The participants then started making mistakes, and their response times increased. They noticed that they weren't doing well, but they didn't know why.
They said things like they had "lost the rhythm" or that the experimenters were flashing subliminal pictures on the screen to distract them (which wasn't true).
We often don't know why we do the things we do. But we are quick to make up a reason that we actually believe, even though it's not true. Psychologists call this confabulation.

SO THEN, WHAT MAKES US CLICK?
Almost all Web sites have target behaviors. How do they get us to buy, register, donate, and click? What makes us click?
To get us to click, they have to persuade us. But don't make the mistake of thinking that the best way to persuade us is to make a logical presentation. Most behavior and decision-making aren't conscious. The most effective Web sites are Web sites that talk to all three brains. When the Web site engages all three brains, then we click.

To sum it all up:

- We like to think we make our decisions based on careful thought, but most of our decisions and actions come from our unconscious.
- The unconscious is smart, efficient, and fast. We couldn't survive without it.
- Web sites that "speak" to all three brains (old brain, mid brain, new brain) are the most effective.

Chapter 2: Wanting to Belong: The Power of Social Validation

Have you ever attended a church or religious service that was not one that you were used to? You weren't sure what was going to happen next. People were responding or praying or singing or chanting in what seemed like a foreign language. If everyone stood up and put a paper bag on their heads and turned around three times, you probably would have looked to see where your paper bag was.

Why is the behavior of others so compelling? Why do we pay attention to and copy what others do? It's called **social validation**.

THE TRAGEDY OF KITTY GENOVESE

One night in 1964 a young woman by the name of Kitty Genovese was attacked in Queens, NY and stabbed to death. According to an article in The New York Times, she was stabbed multiple times by the same man over a 30-minute period, screamed for help repeatedly during the attacks, and yet no one went to her aid. The article said that 38 people witnessed the attack, but no one intervened to help. A line of research into what is called the bystander effect was started.

In one study, they would have someone act as though they were having an epileptic seizure on a city street. If a single bystander came upon the person in distress, that individual helped 85 percent of the time. If five people were present, they found that one person stepped forward to help only 31 percent of the time. They essentially stood around and looked for somebody else to act.

WHY WOULD YOU LISTEN TO TOTAL STRANGERS?

Imagine you're at a chain superstore looking for an HD flat-screen television. An innocent bystander meanders by and you grab him and say, "What do you think of this TV? Did you buy one? Would you buy it again if you had to do it all over?" He tells you his opinion and walks away.

Sound absurd? In the "real world," it is absurd. Online, it's not so absurd. The online version of consumer feedback is faster. You can gather data by reading ratings and reviews. We will avidly read reviews from total strangers. Why? We don't know who the people reviewing the product are, where they come from, their likes and dislikes, or if they are anything like us—and yet, we trust them. If we see that a product has received only one out of five stars, we don't even take a closer look. It's social validation at work.

BUT WHO ARE THEY?

Reviewer feedback is most powerful when we know more about the reviewers than just their names and the dates their feedback was posted.

Taking this into account, what kinds of ratings and reviews will influence us the most? We're most influenced when:

1. We are most influenced when we know the person and the person is telling a story. It is unlikely that we will be reading a review online by someone we actually know. That brings us to #2.
2. We are somewhat less influenced when we don't necessarily know the person, but it's still someone we can imagine because there is a persona, a name (or company name). Again, it always helps if the person is telling a story.
3. We're even less influenced when we don't know the person, and we can't imagine them, but we are provided with a story.
4. We are least influenced when we don't know the person, and we're provided with only a rating.

To sum it all up:

- We're called to act when we know what others have experienced with a product, or we know what they're doing at a Web site, or we even know what they are doing right now.
- We will do what others are doing. We will be drawn to belong.

Chapter 3: Feeling Indebted: How to Build in Reciprocity and Concession

Every year at holiday time I agonize whether or not to send a holiday gift to Deidre. She's been sending me the same box of cheese for 20 years. I'm surrounded by cheese. The last thing I need is a box of cheese. One year I got caught up in the "spirit of the season" and sent her a holiday present in the mail. Shortly thereafter the first box of cheese showed up. The following year the box of cheese arrived early, and I had to send her a present in return. On and on the gift-giving has continued for 20 years.

A SENSE OF OBLIGATION

We return favors and exchange gifts. Sometimes we do this out of love or for fun. But many times, we give gifts or favors out of a sense of obligation. This is a largely unconscious feeling, and it is quite strong. This is called reciprocity.

The power of reciprocity has been well known to people who manage direct marketing campaigns. *In a mail appeal for donations, the normal response rate was 18 percent. If, however, the mailing included personalized address labels, the donations almost doubled to 35 percent.*
Reciprocity is used to persuade you to perform some action, such as making a purchase, volunteering, or funding a project.

WHEN ACCEPTING NO FOR AN ANSWER IS ACTUALLY A GIFT

At the meeting in which I'm making my request for a new playground, I shock the school board by asking for $7,500, not $5,000. The school board shakes their heads and say, "No, no, we can't possibly spend that much money for playground equipment." I look disappointed and then say, "Oh, well, we do have a reduced plan for $5,000." The school board asks to see the reduced plan, and I walk out of the meeting with the $5,000 project approved.

What just happened is called **concession**. When you said no to me, and I accepted that no, my no acted as a gift to you. As a result, you were indebted to me. The board had to reciprocate with something. So, when I offered the reduced plan for $5,000, the board said yes as a way to relieve the indebtedness.

This tactic is sometimes called "**rejection then retreat**." The initiator asks a favor that is well above what most people would agree to. After the refusal, the initiator then asks for another favor that is more reasonable and received exactly what he or she wanted in the first place.

GIVING THINGS AWAY AT A WEB SITE

Anytime something is given away at a Web site, it has created an opportunity to build indebtedness and reciprocity.

Let's say there is an e-commerce site offering free shipping on orders over $75. Is this reciprocity?

Free shipping with conditions, may not be seen as a gift and therefore may not trigger reciprocity.

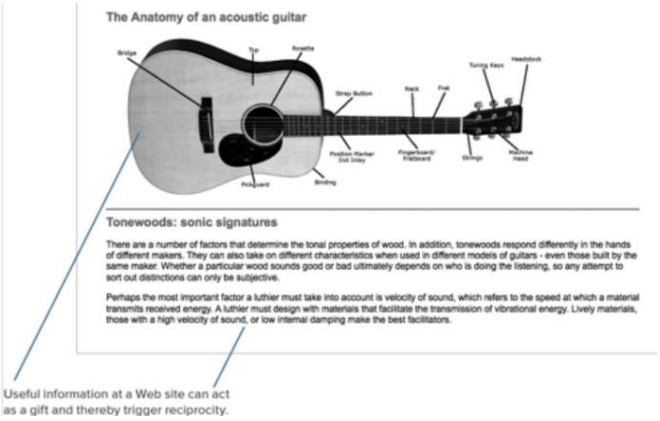
This feels like an even exchange, at best—as such, the offer for free shipping will not create a feeling of indebtedness in us.

For us to consider free shipping to be the gift, we have to feel as if the offer has no strings attached.

Zappos.com has free shipping, no strings attached AND free shipping if you want to return what you bought. Free gifts are very powerful. If a site gives us free gifts, no strings attached—that will trigger reciprocity.

GIVE AWAY FREE INFO

One way that Web sites give gifts is by giving the gift of useful information. For example, if an e-commerce site sells cameras, there could be a portion of the site that features an excellent guide to taking pictures. If the customer appreciates the information that is provided for free, they might feel as if they've been given a gift.



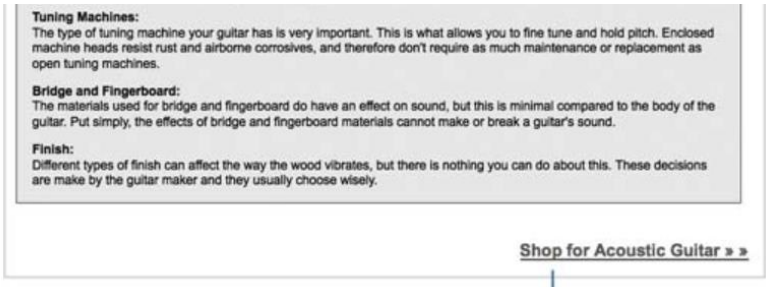
Useful information at a Web site can act as a gift and thereby trigger reciprocity.

REWARD VERSUS RECIPROCITY

In another study (Gamberini et.al., 2007), researchers tested reward vs. reciprocity. They used a Web site that provided useful information about different formats for media files, definitions of media files, when to use each format, and so on. In the Reward Condition, visitors could access the information by first completing a form that asked for their names, addresses, and other demographic information. In the Reciprocity Condition, visitors could immediately access the information, and then they were later asked to fill out the form. Visitors in the Reciprocity Condition were twice as likely to fill out the form than those who experienced the Reward Condition.

IT'S OKAY TO ASK FOR THE RECIPROCAL ACTION

No strings attached is powerful, but it is also okay to ask for a reciprocal action—especially when you provide useful information.



This site suggests the reciprocal action right after the useful information.

To sum it all up:

- Giving a gift triggers indebtedness, which increases the likelihood that others will reciprocate by giving you something.
- If you first ask for something that others consider beyond their means and they say no, follow immediately with a more reasonable request, and they are more likely to say yes.

Chapter 4: Invoking Scarcity—If Something Seems Unavailable, We Seem to Want It Even More

The marketing department should be saying that there are only a limited number available at the first of the year—and they might not be able to fill the demand. Remember the iPhone introduction? When it came out the first time, there were long lines to get one. You can order one, but who knows when you will get it. And Apple implied there might not be enough to go around.

If there is limited availability of something, we assume it is more valuable, and we want it even more.

Social validation and scarcity work together (read Chapter 2, "Wanting to Belong: The Power of Social Validation,"). If we think a lot of other people liked the cookies and that there aren't many cookies left, it creates an even stronger pull to action.

ONLY TWO LEFT IN YOUR SIZE!

It's easy to invoke scarcity at an e-commerce Web site. If we see the phrase, "only one left in stock," we feel that we'd better hurry up and make the purchase before they are all gone.

IF IT COSTS A LOT, IT MUST BE GOOD

A concept similar to scarcity is the idea that things that are more expensive (and therefore harder to get—scarce) are of higher quality. We unconsciously tend to want what is expensive. We unconsciously equate expensive to "better."

SORRY, YOU CAN'T HAVE IT

And one last tactic involving scarcity: Ban something altogether. If something is totally inaccessible, then it is really scarce. If something is forbidden or banned, then we really want it.

To sum it all up:

- If something is scarce, it will seem more desirable and more valuable to us.
- Showing a limited quantity in stock, or a limited time frame that something is available, invokes scarcity. Scarcity motivates us to act.
- Not only products can be scarce. Access to information might be hard to get, and therefore will make that information seem more valuable to us as well.

Chapter 5: Choosing Carefully—Given Too Many Choices, We Freeze (and Then We Don't Choose at All)

One interesting thing about choices is that we think we want a lot of them, but in actuality, a lot of choices hinders our decision-making process. Research shows it doesn't help us as much as we think to have a lot of choices. This is a classic case where what we think we want (conscious brain) is just plain wrong. Too many choices just makes us freeze and then we make no choice at all.

We say we want a lot of choices, but the reality is that when we have a lot of choices, we can't decide.

IN A JAM

Iyengar and Lepper (2000) tested the theory that if we're provided with too many choices, we don't choose at all. Experimenters set up booths at a busy upscale grocery store.

To give you an example of the numbers, if 100 shoppers came:

• At the table with 24 jars, 60 stopped to taste jam but only two purchased jam.

• At the table with six jars, 40 tasted jam and 12 purchased jam.

Less is more.

HOW TO RUIN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

There is some research that shows that a logical analysis of a purchase, or an analysis of your likes and dislikes, may be a harmful thing to engage in.

Wilson and Kraft (1993) asked a control group to analyze their relationships, and another control group to not analyze their relationship. Analyzing the relationships resulted in the relationship ending sooner than the relationships where couples were not asked for an analysis.

Analyzing doesn't just ruin relationships, but it also seems to ruin your satisfaction with the purchases you make. Wilson (1993) studied individuals buying art posters:

• Group A analyzed why they liked and didn't like five art posters.

• Group B did not do any analysis.

Two weeks later, researchers contacted them to see how happy they were with their choices. Those in Group B, were happier with their choices than those in Group A, who had analyzed their art.

It seems that if we make our choice unconsciously, without conscious processing, then we stick with it over time. If we spend more time and logically analyze why we're choosing what we're choosing, we're less satisfied over time with our choices.

WATCHING THE BRAIN LIGHT UP

A relatively new technology called functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) lets us see into the brain while it is working. A group of researchers (McClure et al, 2004) asked individuals to choose between certain money rewards. They could get a small amount of money ($5) now or a larger amount of money ($40) later.

When participants thought about waiting, the pre-frontal cortex (new brain) lit up. But when they thought about getting the money right away, the mid brain lit upApparently, our unconscious, emotional brain (mid brain) is activated when we imagine getting something that we think would be nice, pleasant, and rewarding.

This implies that if we are making a decision about buying something, we will be swayed by whether we can have it right away. The mid brain will compete with the new brain about whether to wait.

TALK TO THE OLD BRAIN

You've just bought a digital camera for $689.99. Now you realize that you didn't buy a carrying case. Are you going to buy the nice, all-weather camera backpack for $89.95? Or are you going to save some money by purchasing a cloth case for only $9.97? In this case, you'll probably choose a less expensive model.

If you had purchased the camera case when you first bought the camera, you probably would have chosen a nicer and more expensive case. In that situation, you are comparing $89.95 to the price of the $689.99 camera. This is an example of **up-sell**.

FIRST IS BEST: THE ORDER EFFECT

You go to a Web site to buy a tent for camping. You answer some questions about the type of camping you plan to do. Two of the four tents are "best buys" for the attributes that are important to you. Which tent will you buy?

Felfernig (2007) set up a research study to find out. The most important attribute was the order in which the tents appeared on the page! They chose the first tent 200 times; they chose the other three tents (combined) only 60 times. This is called an order effect.

To sum it all up:

- We think we want a lot of choices, but lots of choices just makes us unable to take any action at all.
- We can focus only on one or two product attributes at a time.
- If we think we can get something right away, that notion will be a strong pull to take action and buy right away.
- If you want someone to choose a particular product at a Web site, list that product first.

Chapter 6: It's All About You: Speaking to the Self-Centered, Unconscious Mind

You are walking down a dark street. You are all alone. You hear footsteps behind you. Your heart starts beating faster. You can hear the blood throbbing in your veins.

Your primitive old brain is wired to care about you. To the old brain, everything is all about you. You are all that matters. In the scenario where you're walking down the dark street, I grabbed your attention in multiple ways:

• First, it was a story.
• Second, it sounded dangerous, which your old brain is very interested in.
• Third, it started with the word "you" and included seven references to "you" or "your" within only five sentences.

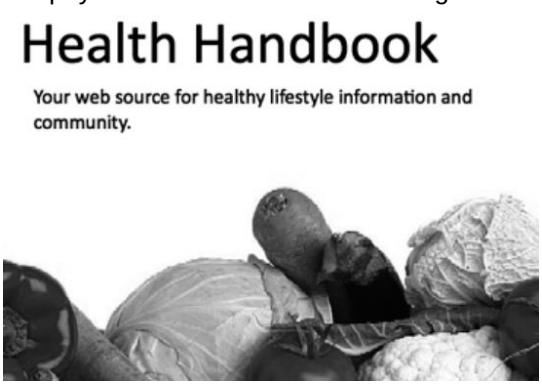
The old brain is constantly scanning the environment looking for any changes that signal danger, food, or sex.

DO SOMETHING THREATENING

There are television commercials that use a dangerous situation (for example, a car chase) that culminates with someone receiving a particular brand of soda or a particular credit card. The idea is that all of our systems are on heightened alert, so we will remember the product, and we will also attach strong emotions to it.

SHOW FOOD

We pay attention to food. In order to grab our attention with food, the food should be shown prominently. Even a site that is not necessarily selling food might be able to use the allure of food to grab and hold our attention.



IMPLY SEX

We all know that sex, or the implication of sex, is a powerful attention-getting technique. Sex is so powerful as an attention-getting technique that it can snag our attention with even the subtlest of associations. A certain look to the eyes, a flash of skin—these are all powerful enough to engage our attention.

DON'T LET THEM GET BORED

If a Web site is about sex or food or danger, it will probably engage the old brain and grab attention. But what about sites that have nothing to do with sex, food, or danger? Can they grab attention, too?

Because our old brain is constantly scanning the environment, any change in the environment will be noticed. This is why banner ads that move or change at a Web site are so effective at getting attention. Every time it changes we have to look at it.

To sum it all up:

- The old brain cares about you. It cares about protecting you, feeding you, and helping you to reproduce.

- If you want to grab someone's attention, you need to get the attention of the old brain by having something change, by showing food, by implying sex, or by using the word you.

Chapter 7: Building Commitment—We Want to Think We're Consistent

We tell ourselves stories about ourselves, and then we tell those same stories to others. We will act based on one of the stories, or personas, we have about ourselves. We have different personas for different aspects of ourselves in relation to others. For example, there is a persona we have as a husband or wife, another persona we have as a parent, another persona at work, etc.
These self-personas are important in decision-making because we strive to be consistent in our decision-making.

If you ask someone to commit to something small first, then it will be easier to get a larger commitment from them later.

FIRST AN IPOD, THEN A MAC?
For as long as there were PCs, I was a PC type person. Then the iPod came out, and I decided that would be a great gizmo to have while exercising: I broke a little bit from my non-Apple, all-PC persona to buy an Apple product. It was a crack in my PC persona. I was now a PC person who used an Apple product. When it came time to purchase a new laptop, I dissipated the dissonance by buying a Mac laptop. I had effortlessly erased years of a PC persona, because my persona had already been sliding that way, even though I was not conscious of the slide until it came time for the larger purchase. Whether Apple did this on purpose or not, the introduction of the iPod was a masterful lead-in to getting people to switch from PCs to Macs.

WHEN A REVIEW IS MORE THAN A REVIEW
The more public the commitment, the more it will stick, and the more it will affect current and future behavior. To strengthen the level of commitment, Web site owners can heighten the public element of the action. If you have written a review of a product or a testimonial of the company, you have made a more public commitment. You are saying, "I am a person who believes in this product" (This assumes that the review is positive, of course. Writing a negative review is just as strong of a commitment, but in the opposite direction.)

To sum it all up:

- Ask people to commit to an idea verbally or, even better, in writing.
- If possible, do this in stages, so that you are asking for the commitment first and then, at a later date, asking for an action that is consistent with that commitment.
- Getting people to write or sign something strengthens commitment.
- If we go through a difficult experience, we will be even more committed to the product or affiliation.

Chapter 8: Using Similarity, Attractiveness, and Association: Are We the Same?

You are more likely to listen to and buy from someone who is like you and someone you find attractive.

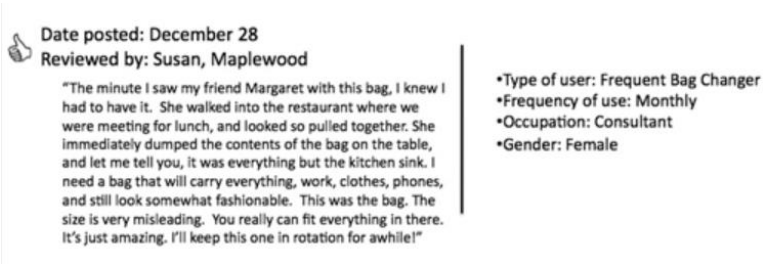
There is a lot of information to process, and all that processing is done in a split second. To process that quickly, the old brain takes a lot of shortcuts and makes broad generalizations. "Sizing up" other people is one of those types of processing. The old brain is making sure you are safe, and it does that by quickly sizing up the situation, the environment, and definitely the other people nearby. The old brain then decides whether you should flee the situation, have sex, or eat something! It sounds crude and primitive, but that's what the old brain is—crude and primitive.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AN ATTRACTIVE PERSON HOLDS A BOTTLE OF BEAR?

That old brain that is deciding who to trust, who is attractive, and who is similar to me also makes quick associations. If someone who is attractive or liked is paired or associated with something else, the attractiveness or liking "bleeds over". There is an entire industry (called product placement) based on placing products in movies that attractive movie stars will then pick up and use as part of the movie scene.

NOT JUST PICTURES

Although pictures are very powerful, they are not the only way we make associations and decisions about similarities. Narratives can also convey similarity. If we read stories about a celebrity using a product, or we see someone who seems like us using a specific product or service, we will be persuaded to also use that product or service.



This person sounds like me, so I bet I'd like this product, too.

To sum it all up:

- For the old brain, it's all about deciding to flee, eat, or have sex.
- Don't underestimate the power of attractive people.
- We are swayed most by those we think are similar to us.
- Associating an object with a celebrity or an attractive person will make the object more attractive, too.

Chapter 9: Afraid to Lose—How Fear of Loss Trumps Our Anticipation of Victory

IS IT A SNAKE?

The old brain, mid brain, and new brain all work together. Have you ever been walking in the woods and you are suddenly startled by something on the path ahead of you? Before you can think what is happening you have jumped back, your heart is racing, your adrenaline is flowing. Is it a snake? Did you see a snake? Oh, you realize, it is just a stick that kind of looks like a snake. Your heart rate returns to normal and you continue on your way. What just happened?

The 'amygdala' (there are two of them, one in the right half of your brain and one in the left half) is where emotions are processed. There are two pathways in and out of the amygdala:

- One comes from the new brain.
- The other is a direct path from the senses.

The theory has emerged that the two pathways in and out of the amygdala work together. The amygdala will not "see" the details of what your eyes saw. So the information will only be a vague image or idea. The amygdala doesn't see the stick clearly. It only registers something that "kind of maybe" looks like a snake, but that is enough to have the mid brain talk to the old brain and set the alarm bells ringing. While all that is going on, the visual part of the new brain has now analyzed the "snake" and realized that it is a stick.

FEARING A BLUE SQUARE

If I ask you where you were and what you were doing on July 16, 2002, chances are you won't be able to remember. But if I ask you where you were and what you were doing on September 11, 2001, you will be able to tell me in minute detail where you were and what you were doing.

When we are emotionally aroused, whether negatively or positively, we forget the event less quickly, which means we encode it into our long-term memory more effectively.

Our old and mid brains know what is going on before our new brain does.

SUBTRACT, DON'T ADD

The model of computer you are configuring in this example already has the better processor. It is "included in price." If you want to spend less money, then you choose a lesser processor and subtract money. This uses the **Fear of Losing principle.** This means we'll spend more money than if we had started with a lower-end (and less expensive) processor and were asked to spend more money to get a better model.

IS IT 90 PERCENT GOOD OR 10 PERCENT BAD?

DAMASIO (1994) POINTED out that we have such an automatic fear of losing, that even the way things are phrased can be important. He cited research in the medical field showing that when patients are told "if you undergo this medical treatment, you have a 90 percent chance of living," patients choose the treatment. If, however, patients are told "if you undergo this medical treatment, you have a 10 percent chance of dying," patients are much less likely to choose the treatment.

To sum it all up:

- We are programmed to notice and pay attention to situations that might result in our fear of losing.
- Fear of losing motivates us more than the opportunity to win.
- Our bodies and our unconscious will pick up on possible loss situations faster than our conscious mind picks up on them.
- If an event is associated with emotion, we will remember it better.
- Even subtle wording can affect our response.

Chapter 10: Using Pictures and Stories—the Best Way to Talk to Our Unconscious Minds´

When we hear a story, we give the storyteller all of our attention. A good story communicates information thoroughly and commits the information to memory.

WHAT IS A STORY?

A description of a character or characters and a relating of what happens to the characters over time (past or future). The character might be you or someone you know, or a fictitious person, or an animal. The character could be your car or your computer.

"A well-told story conveys great quantities of information in relatively few words in a format that is easily assimilated by the listener or viewer." Nahum Gershon

YOUR BRAIN NATURALLY CHUNKS

Stories are an excellent way for us to process and store information. A story contains a large amount of information in digestible chunks. Psychologists call this chunking of parts of a story **event structure perception**. Stories have **event boundaries** between those chunks. The event boundaries occur when there is a transition in the story, such as a change in location or a different character.

A PICTURE IS WORTH....

When we think about a story (or actually when we think about anything), we think in pictures and visual images. The visual part of the brain takes up half of the brain processing power. We remember things we have seen visually better than anything else. This is called **pictorial superiority effect (PSE)**. People can remember more than 2,500 pictures with 90 percent accuracy. We remember only 10 percent of what we hear or read (without pictures).

To sum it all up:

- We are programmed to think in stories. Web sites with stories will grab our attention.
- Using the word "story" will grab our attention.
- We pay attention to and remember pictures better than words.
- Combining pictures and stories together is an unbeatable combination to grab our attention, hold our attention, and help us remember.

Chapter 11: We're Social Animals—Finding the Next Big Thing by Making It Social

The founders of the cellphone shelved the entire project for years. Why? Because they figured each head of state for major nations would have one. They thought they'd use it to prevent a world war. They had no idea people would use it to call home before leaving work to see if they should pick up milk!

CAUGHT BY OUR OWN SHORTSIGHTEDNESS

There is one route out of this shortsightedness. And that is to think about being social. We are social animals. Being human means being social. History shows us that whatever technology there is, we will find a way to use it to communicate—to make it social. A great example is the recent update from Spotify. You can now create a room together where everyone can add their favorite songs. This update was made with this theory in the back of their heads.

Fogg and Eckles (2007) described what they called the "behavior chain" for enticing us to participate online at social networking sites. They describe three phases:

- Phase 1 is Discovery. We learn about the service and visit the site.
- Phase 2 is Superficial Involvement. We try out the service and get started.
- Phase 3 is True Commitment. We create content, use the site, involve others, and stay active and loyal.

HOW TO BE PERSUASIVE ONLINE

Weiksner, Fogg, and Liu (2008) analyzed the types of persuasion used in Facebook applications. They identified that popular third-party applications use the basic principles of reciprocity, social validation, and similarity to promote themselves and cause a viral spread. For example, if you give me a "poke" on Facebook, then I may feel the need to give you a return poke or give you something back. All the principles and ideas in this book can be used on social networking sites.

THE NEXT BIG THING

So, you can't know what the next big online thing will be. Because if you did, you would be making a lot of money right now. But you do know that the next big thing will involve something social. Because it always does.

To sum it all up:

- We are social animals. We will always figure out a way to use whatever technology is there to communicate and be social.
- Social networking sites that use principles of persuasion are the ones that grow the fastest.
- If you want to be the next big thing, figure out how to use a new technology in a social way.