

THE TIPPING POINT

How Little Things Can
Make a Big Difference

MALCOLM GLADWELL

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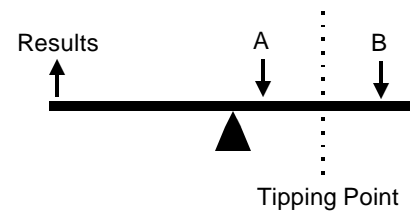
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MAIN IDEA

The best way to think about the emergence of new ideas, products and consumer preferences is to expect them to follow the laws of epidemics rather than traditional cause-and-effect relationships. The three critical traits of epidemics are:

1. *They are highly contagious* – meaning small groups of people can spread an epidemic throughout the broader population.
2. *Little changes can have big effects* – once a critical mass of people are infected with a virus.
3. *Changes happen dramatically rather than in a linear fashion* – meaning ideas can spread quickly rather than building steadily.

The “Tipping Point” (a term coined by the people who study epidemics) is the name given to the moment at which an epidemic or a virus reaches critical mass. Once an epidemic reaches this point, it is poised to enjoy sudden and dramatic growth almost overnight. Or, to visualize this concept, the Tipping Point can be considered as a specific point on a balanced beam. When pressure is applied below the Tipping Point (Point A), only very limited results will be obtained. However, when pressure is applied beyond the Tipping Point, significantly larger results will be obtained.



The concept of a Tipping Point may seem counterintuitive at first. This is because most of us are used to the world operating in a linear fashion where the results are commensurate with the effort invested. However, the world of viruses is very different. In all such geometric progressions, there is a single point at which growth moves sharply upwards. This is the essence of the Tipping Point concept in action.

To actually reach and then ideally move beyond the Tipping Point, a new epidemic, virus or idea must obey three basic rules:

The Three Rules of Epidemics	Rule #1	The Law of the Few
	Rule #2	The Stickiness Factor
	Rule #3	The Power of Context

“The Tipping Point is the biography of an idea, and the idea is very simple. It is that the best way to understand the emergence of fashion trends, the ebb and flow of crime waves, or, for that matter, the transformation of unknown books into bestsellers, or the rise of teenage smoking, or the phenomena of word of mouth, or any number of the other mysterious changes that mark everyday life is to think of them as epidemics. Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread just like viruses do.”

– Malcolm Gladwell

Rule #1 – The Law of the Few Pages 2 - 3

The process of spreading an epidemic is never a mass effort. Instead, the majority of the work will be done by a handful of exceptional people who have the appropriate skill sets. The three key types of people who spread epidemics are:

1. Connectors – people with a special gift for networking and bringing people together.
2. Mavens – information specialists who are always up to date with what’s new and interesting.
3. Salesmen – people who are good at persuading others to act in some way.

To succeed in building an epidemic, get the right kinds of people involved.

Rule #2 – The Stickiness Factor Pages 4 - 5

Quite simply, the more memorable or noteworthy an idea, the greater its “stickiness” or impact. To succeed in building an epidemic, do everything you can to ensure your message won’t go in one ear and out the other. Unless people remember what they’re told, it is highly unlikely that idea will change the way they think or act.

To build a powerful epidemic, increase the stickiness of your idea.

Rule #3 – The Power of Context Pages 6 - 8

Epidemics always reflect the environment in which they operate. The key to actually getting people to act on a new idea lies in surrounding the idea with the right environment. Human beings are influenced by their environment much more than they realize. The context in which a new idea is placed as part and parcel of an epidemic will have a profound influence on its eventual spread.

Therefore, to spread an epidemic, create the right context.

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