

THE TIPPING POINT

Change happens all the time, naturally, in the form of *cultural epidemics* (like fashion trends, technological crazes, and some organizational changes). The same dynamics that cause cultural epidemics can be used to drive *intentional change*.

What makes the difference between change that fizzles and change that transforms?

- 1. Law of the few.** In a group, community or organization, some people are more important than others for spreading a message and promoting change.
 - **Connectors:** These are people who know lots of other people; not just people like them but also other, diverse groups and individuals. They aren't close friends with all these people, but they know them well enough to chat casually. Connectors are gregarious but not necessarily extroverted.
 - **Mavens:** Mavens are information specialists. They gather, organize and relay information. They provide this information freely; they want to help other people. Their information is regarded as very valuable and accurate. They are often called "experts" or "authorities."
 - **Salespeople:** These are the people who persuade others to act. They are charismatic and often very optimistic, happy people. They genuinely love other people. They influence people verbally, nonverbally and even "spiritually." Their way of life is contagious.
- 2. Stickiness factor.** The quality and nature of the message is critical. The message must *stick* with people: It makes them remember it and act on it.
 - Sticky messages gets at "the heart of the matter" from the audience's perspective—not your own. They are fundamental and easily transmissible, and often shift people's thinking.
 - Developing a sticky message will probably require going against what people think will work (e.g., conventional wisdom).
 - Minor tinkering to a message can dramatically affect its stickiness. To find out if a message is sticky, you must test it out!
- 3. Power of context.** Whether and how people act depends primarily on the situation or environment they are in.
 - Small factors in the environment can dramatically affect behavior. Peer pressure and community influence outweigh personal values. Investigate people's contexts.
 - Watch out for the tendency to attribute someone's behavior to their personality when they are responding to their context ("fundamental attribution error").
 - Small groups are very effective for magnifying an idea and creating an epidemic. Organizations and groups should stay under 150 members (Dunbar's number) in order to maintain personal connections between people.