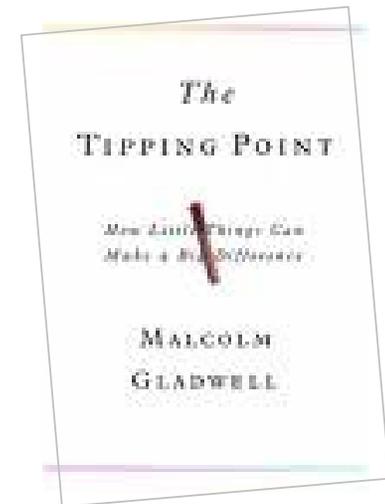


The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference
Digital Book Club
Malcolm Gladwell
Abacus 2003

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“It's a book about change. In particular, it's a book that presents a new way of understanding why change so often happens as quickly and as unexpectedly as it does.”



When traditional marketing thinking fails it's high time for change. Innovation is key. How to bring fresh thoughts into your marketing strategy? Malcolm Gladwell traces the development of ideas.

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Epidemics of ideas

How can little things make a big difference? That is the question at the heart of Gladwell's zeitgeist romp through American pop culture. Unconventional, bordering on the business equivalent of punk, Gladwell starts his journey deep in the street life of New York where he charts the unexpected return of Hush Puppies, he takes us on a subway ride to explain why some crime reduction programmes work and others collapse, into the consultation rooms of disease clinics that conquered epidemics, behind the scenes with the focus groups that drive the Sesame Street childrens' television show; even a few consumer package goods companies make an appearance. Like a travel writer, he describes these worlds we wander through with a richness and grittiness, and left me feeling like I'd done a few thousand miles on Greyhounds round The States.

But this is no picture postcard book. Gladwell weaves theory through the fabric of these examples. And the theory delves into the science of epidemiology and the process of disease transmission. Not what you would recognise as marketing; at least not on the surface.

Gladwell's obsession is epidemics. Epidemics of ideas; how they start, incubate, spread, and are caught. The roles people and media play along the transmission path: the maverks who nurture the knowledge, the connectors whose gregariousness takes messages far and wide, the salesmen convince those exposed to adopt. The journey that begins after the marketing message has been released. The factors needed for an idea's spread to 'tip' into an explosive epidemic.

Had you thought about how the numerous micro-markets join up and what makes some susceptible to your painstakingly crafted message while others never even register? What is holding back these groups from adopting and why is the pace so radically different?

The familiar marketing adoption curve makes a welcome appearance as the early majority follow the innovators and our ever-present laggards drag their heels. But how much had you questioned the very nature of that curve before?

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About the Digital Book Club series

In times of huge economic and social change, knowledge becomes a critical success factor. We created the Digital Book Club reviews to bring you closer to the people and ideas shaping the digital networked economy. They are short reviews of texts we'd recommend, and are published monthly. We also publish similar Digital Thought Leadership interviews and Digital Insight Reports to accompany our own talks and training workshops. Knowledge and training can unlock the potential of your team.

Why tipping point?

I was lucky enough to study epidemiology at college and have enjoyed using a few of its principles in marketing in my own journey. Comparing the infection of ideas with the infection of disease is not new and many other marketers have also arrived at points along Gladwell's path. But what is now clear is that we were merely wandering in the foothills while Gladwell was rolling out the highway into and through the mountains.

In a world of ever more complex social structures, ever more prolific and fractured media, ever greater noise across the landscape of our lives, and exponential growth in communications Gladwell's approach takes on an essential relevancy. This is a complement, not a threat, to traditional marketing theory. The Tipping Point does not challenge the notions of brand and response marketing, but instead provides a window through which to view and re-view markets, plans, products, and ideas. It is a health check to strategy, a model for marketers a framework every marketer should learn, a tool to embrace with passion.

Actions

Think about your own marketing strategy and find ways for introducing some innovations in reaching your consumers

Access more of our Digital Book Club Reviews by signing up for our email service. Buy your copy of the book for reference in a single click through Amazon affiliate DigitalStrategyConsulting.com; see what else we're recommending and why.

Sign up for our Digital Thought Leaders series that accompanies the Digital Book Club.

Invite us to come and talk with your team about changes in the near future and their impact on your business.

Resources & Links

The Digital Book Club on DigitalStrategyConsulting.com

The Digital Jargon Buster on DigitalJargonBuster.org

Our company support programmes includes

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- Workshops for staff at all levels
- Research briefing services
- Training and development

To find out more about our knowledge development programme, book in for a free coaching consultation

About the author

Danny Meadows-Klue has been a commentator on the digital networked industries since 1995. He managed the UK's first online newspaper and has helped run web businesses ranging from mass market portals and consumer magazines, to online stores, search and email services.



Among his industry roles he is the co-founder and former chairman of the UK and European Internet and Interactive Advertising Bureau, and has been lecturing on digital marketing for more than a decade. He set up Digital Strategy Consulting in 2000 to help firms accelerate their businesses through digital networks.



Making sense of a digital world

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