

Book ~ Review Form

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

Author(s): Malcolm Gladwell

Year Published: 2000

Author's argument (or perspective) and summary of the content:

The Tipping Point is the explanation of how a simple idea and small steps or changes can make a big difference causing a "tip" to occur in a particular situation, much like in an epidemic. *The Tipping Point* equates one dramatic moment in an epidemic when everything can change all at once. Malcolm Gladwell begins with an example involving "Hush Puppies" shoes and along with the fall of crime in New York. Both examples exhibit contagious behavior and in each case little changes lead to big effects. The Tipping Point is described as a magic moment when an idea, trend or social behavior crosses a threshold, tips and spreads like wildfire. This book is about the dynamics of change. In particular, it's a book that presents a new way of understanding why change so often happens as quickly or as unexpectedly as it does by examining a few of the social epidemics that surround us.

Main lessons learned/ applications to work in the international maternal and child health sector :

The author describes that the introduction of a new idea, a new product, or a behavior is much like that of an epidemic. He shows certain non-obvious aspects of epidemics that give simple, powerful, yet usable insights into how to create an epidemic.

He goes on to argue that epidemics, whether of disease or ideas, all have certain characteristics that, when the conditions are met, catch on and spread like wildfire. These characteristics, which are important for us to make note of in our work in communities, are:

1. **The Law of the Few** – There are 3 types of people that are necessary for an idea to spread. These people are the Connectors, people that just know a lot of people and have access to a wide range of social circles, the Mavens, people who collect information about a particular market and distribute it freely to help others make educated decisions, and the Salesmen, those who have the skills to persuade people who might be skeptical. It's not enough to get your idea to a group of people. You have to get it to those people within the group who are capable of influencing lots of people in one of these three ways.
2. **The Stickiness Factor** – The message has to be interesting or valuable enough that people become passionate about it and want to spread it. Now more than ever, people are overwhelmed with advertisements and messages everywhere they look. To cope, people filter out what's important from what's not, so they won't remember much of what they read or watch. If the message isn't worthy of being remembered, it won't spread.

3. **The Power of Context** – Seemingly small conditions and changes in the environment can have a large effect on how quickly an epidemic spreads. There's usually a threshold called a Tipping Point. Below the Tipping Point, nothing happens, but once it hits the Tipping Point, it takes off and spreads quickly.

He wrote about how ideas spread from one group to another. In the early stages, the people who are most receptive to your message are the Innovators and Early Adopters. These people love to try new things, aren't worried about what others are doing, and aren't afraid to take risk.

However, if you only reach these first people, your idea won't spread. The problem is that there's a gap between those who love taking risks and the majority of people. The problem is that these groups don't talk or interact with one another, so there's a gap that your message must cross to jump from the trend setters to the mainstream. This is where involving the Connectors, Mavens and Salesmen comes in to play.

It's not enough for your idea to be good to jump this gap. Early Adopters like the new and innovative, they want to be different. The Majority are looking for something stable and less risky. They don't want to waste time and money on things that might be frivolous. They want something predictable.

Gladwell makes the point that reaching the Tipping Point is not about making broad sweeping changes. Usually, it only takes a few smaller changes (small doable actions) to push an epidemic over the Tipping Point and have it spread.

Reader's professional opinion on the author's argument (perspective....

The Tipping Point gives us a big picture and asks us to look at it in different light and to explore changing our perspective a bit about the nature of change and social epidemics. He starts with Paul Revere's ride from Boston; he takes us to New York, the AIDs epidemic, on book signing tours; he traces fashion trends and finally tackles health issues.

The Tipping Point is a good book for anyone involved with getting a message out. Although I thought he wandered a bit from his original premise, I found each of Gladwell's many points to be well-presented, and more importantly a great demonstration on how very small changes can have dramatic effects on people's behavior, as well as how and why small groups of people can end up having a large influence on others.

On a scale of 1(not recommend to others in SBC) to 10 (highly recommended for others in SBC) – how would you rate this book?

9 – it is an interesting easy to read book

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