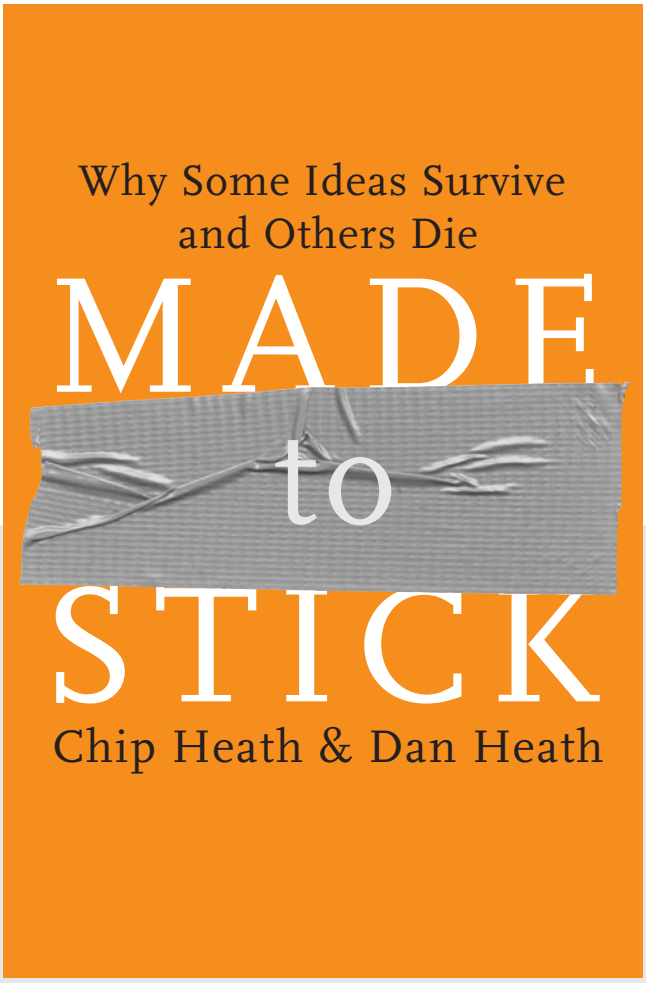
MADE to STICK

TEACHER'S GUIDE



RANDOM HOUSE HARDCOVER • ISBN 13: 978-1-4000-6428-1
304 pages • $24.95/$30.00Can.

OVERVIEW

Made to Stick is a book about creating messages that last, messages that create change. So often when we're given communication advice, it's about the delivery: Stand up straight. Make eye contact. Or it's "meta-advice": *Tell 'em what you're gonna tell 'em, tell 'em, then tell 'em what you told 'em. Know your audience.* But there's one thing missing: What do you actually say or write? For any given idea we have, there are 100 different ways to communicate it. Which one do you choose? The book answers these questions, and this guide helps to distill these concepts into teachable exercises.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The book opens with the famous urban legend about the business traveler who accepts a drink from an attractive stranger, only to lose consciousness and wake up in a bathtub full of ice—without his kidneys. Why does a false idea like the "kidney thieves" story circulate so effortlessly, when so many of us fight in vain to have our ideas stick?

A sticky idea is one that is understood, remembered, and creates some kind of change—in opinion, behavior, or values.

We begin to show that dissimilar ideas—say, the kidney thieves tale and a non-profit campaign warning about the fattiness of movie popcorn—have certain traits in common. In studying a panorama of ideas, ranging from urban legends to ad campaigns to proverbs, we've identified six traits that sticky ideas share. (See pp. 16–19 for a summary.) They are: **SIMPLE, UNEXPECTED, CONCRETE, CREDIBLE, EMOTIONAL,** and **STORY.**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it so easy for an urban legend like the "kidney thieves" to stick?
2. What "idea traits" were shared by the "kidney thieves" urban legend and the CSPI's campaign against movie popcorn?
3. What are some examples of situations when it'd be important for you to make an idea stick? [Note: Here you are fishing for ideas that need to endure, like strategies or advice or job interviews, versus ideas that don't, like small talk.]
4. The authors cite a research study that shows that there are a few templates that are responsible for lots of successful ads. They say a "color by numbers" approach may actually be desirable. Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. What is the "Curse of Knowledge"? Have you ever been on the other side of the Curse of Knowledge . . . from your parents, an auto mechanic, a doctor? Have you ever had professors (present company excluded) who have suffered from the Curse of Knowledge?
6. Take an idea like the Atkins diet. What traits of stickiness does it exhibit?

ACTIVITIES/EXERCISES

1. **Unpacking urban legends.**
   - **a.** Start by asking, "What is your favorite urban legend?" Many students will believe the legends about "you only use 10% of your brain," the Kidney Theft Ring, and booby-trapped Halloween candy. It typically takes time to get students to tell the first urban legend, but after the exercise gets started it's a great source of laughter and fun.
   - **b.** Keep track of the legends students tell on the board and afterward go back and take a few of the legends that get the most reaction and ask, "What makes this one stick?" The discussion will highlight many of the points we describe in the book: they're unexpected, emotion-provoking, etc.
   - **c.** Make the point that it's unfair that these bogus ideas survive in the world, while teachers, managers, or public health officials have trouble getting their ideas across.

2. **Unsticking sticky ideas.**
   a. Give students some sticky ideas and assign them to make the sticky ideas unsticky. This is in the spirit of the example we give in Chapter 1 (p. 21), converting JFK's man on the moon idea into "Our mission is to become the international leader in the space industry, using our capacity for technological innovation to build a bridge towards humanity's future." You can use any sticky idea—some candidates might be: the Kidney Theft legend, the "razor blade in the apple" Halloween legend, the "This is your brain on drugs" campaign, or "stop, drop and roll".
   b. Compare the before and after and diagnose which traits are changing to make the idea less sticky. For instance, in the JFK doublespeak example, the idea is growing radically less concrete, less unexpected, and less simple.

3. **The "Tappers and Listeners" Game.**
   a. See the description on pages 19–21. You can run this game live—you are the tapper and the class is the listener. Set up the game as follows: "I'm going to tap out the rhythm to a song that all of you know. Afterwards I'm going to ask you to guess what song it is. Please hold your guesses until I finish tapping". We suggest you tap out "The Star-Spangled Banner." Often people will guess "Happy Birthday."
   b. Debrief: Discuss why the game is hard for the Listener but seems easy to the Tapper. Use this as a way to introduce the Curse of Knowledge concept, and then broaden the discussion to the many areas of life where the Curse of Knowledge is in evidence: teachers and students, doctors and patients, managers and employees, parents and children, etc.

EXPANDED ACTIVITY

Speech exercise

We use this exercise to emphasize to students how difficult it is to make ideas stick. It successfully opens them to a module (or a whole course on communication). It's best when it happens early on so students can see, in real life, how difficult it is to convey an idea to others. This exercise never fails to produce lots of enthusiasm and good insight.

Students are given some background information from the Department of Justice (see pp. 4–9 of this guide) and they prepare a one-minute speech for or against the idea that property crime is a serious problem facing the United States. In class, students present their speeches to a small group of 7 or 8. They carefully rate each speaker on scales that indicate how compelling, interesting, and persuasive each speaker is, then they think the exercise is over.

You then distract the students by asking them to take a short break or watch a brief in-class video, about 10–15 minutes of distraction in all. Then you give them a surprise assignment to recall everything they can remember from the speeches they just heard. An embarrassed groan typically fills the classroom as students realize they don't remember much of what they heard only 15 minutes ago. After everyone writes down what they can remember, they get together in their group to compare notes on who made their messages stick. Each group quickly realizes that certain tactics worked poorly—complex messages with lots of statistics don't stick. And certain tactics work well: People remember simple messages, with "human scale" statistics. They remember concrete, vivid examples. They remember personal stories.

In class, you can conduct a simple discussion based around two questions: "What stuck?" and "What didn't?" The discussion will set up the rest of the course well, because the things that worked provide an outline of the topics in *Made to Stick:* In almost every class of 30 or more people, at least one person will have been successful by using each tool from the SUCCES framework. The power of this exercise is that it facilitates easy comparison. Because students are all given identical assignments, they see that some messages succeed and some fail spectacularly, and there is a logic to what works and what doesn't.

Preparation question for students: You should prepare a 1 minute persuasive speech to either support or oppose the idea that property crime is a serious problem in the United States. If your last name is in the beginning of the alphabet (A–K), you should argue that property crime *is a serious problem*. If your name is in the latter part of the alphabet (L–Z) you should be argue that property crime *is not a serious problem*. Take the 1 minute time limit seriously—during class you will be timed on the speech, so make sure you can give it in one minute or less. You will give your speech to a group of 6–8 classmates and they will judge how persuasive it is.

To help in preparing your speech, you have been given the Department of Justice crime statistics for 1999. You should treat these statistics as the "truth" (i.e., assume the methodology is reasonable; don't spend your time in the speech questioning these statistics).

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs

Bureau of Justice Statistics
National Crime Victimization Survey

August 2000, NCJ 182734

Criminal Victimization 1999
Changes 1998–99 with Trends 1993–99

By Callie Marie Rennison, Ph.D.
BJS Statistician

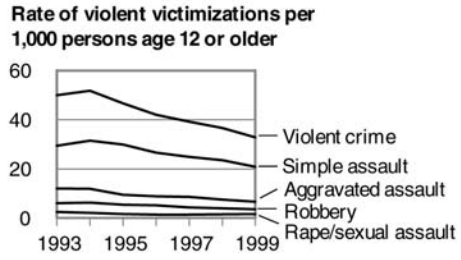
Approximately 28.8 million violent and property crimes were experienced by Americans age 12 or older during 1999 according to National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) data. Overall victimizations included about 21.2 million property crimes (burglary, motor vehicle theft and household theft), 7.4 million violent crimes (rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault), and approximately 0.2 million personal thefts (pocket picking and purse snatching).

In 1999 there were 33 violent victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older. This represented a 10% decrease from the 37 per 1,000 in 1998. The rate of property victimization fell 9% from 1998 to 1999, from 217 to 198 per 1,000 households. The 1999 estimates of violence continued a consistent downward trend that began in 1994, while those for overall property crime began declining in 1974.

Violent victimization rates fell 34% from 50 to 33 victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older between 1993 and 1999. The 1993 data were the first from a complete year following the survey's redesign. The 1999 personal theft rate of 0.9 per 1,000 persons represents a significant decline from the 1993 values (2.3 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older).

Highlights

Every major type of personal and property crime measured decreased between 1993 and 1999.



- According to National Crime Victimization Survey data, from 1998 to 1999 the overall violent crime rate declined 10%, and the property crime rate fell 9%.
- Victimization rates in 1999 are the lowest recorded since the survey's creation in 1973.[1]
- The decline in overall violent crime rate resulted from a decrease in the simple assault rate. Apparent declines in robbery and aggravated assault rates were not significant.
- Overall property crime rates fell between 1998 and 1999 due to lower rates of burglary and household theft.
- The motor vehicle theft rate remained similar to 1998 rate.
- During 1999 males and blacks were victims of overall violent crime at rates greater than those of whites and persons of other races.
- 54% of overall violent crime victims knew the perpetrator(s) in 1999. Almost 7 in 10 rape or sexual assault victims, in contrast to fewer than 5 in 10 aggravated assault victims, knew the offender(s) as acquaintance, friend, relative, or intimate.
- 44% of overall violent victimizations and 34% of all property crimes were reported to the police in 1999. The most frequently reported crime was motor vehicle theft (84%), while the least frequently reported victimization was personal theft (26%).

[1]Pre-1992 estimates were adjusted to account for the 1992 redesign of the National Crime Victimization Survey.

Appendix table 1. Violent victimization rates of selected demographics categories, 1993-99

Demographic categories	Number of violent crimes per 1,000 persons age 12 or older							Average annual change in the rate per 1,000, 1993-99
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	
Gender								
Male	59.8	61.1	55.7	49.9	45.8	43.1	37.0	-4.1*
Female	40.7	43.0	38.1	34.6	33.0	30.4	28.8	-2.3‡
Race								
White	47.9	50.5	44.7	40.9	38.3	36.3	31.9	-3.0*
Black	67.4	61.3	61.1	52.3	49.0	41.7	41.6	-4.6*
Other	39.8	49.9	41.9	33.2	28.0	27.6	24.5	-3.6*
Hispanic origin								
Hispanic	55.2	61.6	57.3	44.0	43.1	32.8	33.8	-4.9*
Non-Hispanic	49.5	50.7	45.2	41.6	38.3	36.8	32.4	-3.1*
Annual household income								
Less than $7,500	84.7	86.0	77.8	65.3	71.0	63.8	57.5	-4.7*
$7,500-$14,999	56.4	60.7	49.8	52.1	51.2	49.3	44.5	-2.0‡
$15,000-$24,999	49.0	50.7	48.9	44.1	40.1	39.4	35.3	-2.6*
$25,000-$34,999	51.0	47.3	47.1	43.0	40.2	42.0	37.9	-2.0‡
$35,000-$49,999	45.6	47.0	45.8	43.0	38.7	31.7	30.3	-3.1*
$50,000-$74,999	44.0	48.0	44.6	37.5	33.9	32.0	33.3	-2.6*
$75,000 or more	41.3	39.5	37.3	30.5	30.7	33.1	22.9	-2.8*

Note: These rates are based on the collection year. Thus, the 1993, 1994, and 1995 rates differ from rates published in *Changes in Criminal Victimization, 1994-95* (NCJ 162032), which are based on data years. The regression coefficient (*b*) — the average annual change, 1993-99 — is based on a linear trend test. See *Survey methodology* for further information.
*1993-99 difference is significant at the 95% confidence level.
‡1993-99 difference is significant at the 90% confidence level.

Appendix table 2. Property crime rates of selected household demographics, 1993-99

Demographic categories	Number of property crimes per 1,000 households							Average annual change in the rate per 1,000, 1993-99
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	
Race								
White	309.7	304.8	283.4	259.9	242.3	212.6	190.0	-21.2*
Black	376.6	347.8	328.8	310.0	292.0	248.0	249.9	-22.1*
Other	349.6	313.1	337.4	268.4	237.4	224.5	206.3	-25.1*
Hispanic origin								
Hispanic	429.7	435.9	385.3	328.1	329.4	267.6	232.5	-35.5*
Non-Hispanic	311.0	300.3	282.8	261.2	240.8	212.5	194.6	-20.5*
Location								
Urban	404.8	384.7	358.3	334.5	309.9	274.2	256.3	-25.6*
Suburban	305.1	297.2	280.6	250.5	235.4	204.5	181.4	-21.8*
Rural	246.4	245.2	228.4	206.0	187.7	173.5	159.8	-15.0*
Annual household income								
Less than $7,500	305.9	299.6	304.3	282.7	258.8	209.0	220.8	-17.7*
$7,500-$14,999	285.9	299.1	267.1	247.5	236.3	229.8	200.1	-15.3*
$15,000-$24,999	307.0	308.1	289.8	273.1	242.4	211.0	214.9	-18.7*
$25,000-$34,999	336.7	305.2	294.8	285.1	260.3	233.8	199.1	-21.5*
$35,000-$49,999	342.7	326.9	301.5	287.6	271.7	221.7	207.6	-23.5*
$50,000-$74,999	374.4	364.1	333.2	284.0	270.9	248.6	213.6	-16.4*
$75,000 or more	400.3	356.0	350.4	304.6	292.8	248.6	220.4	-29.2*

Note: These rates are based on the collection year. Thus, the 1993, 1994, and 1995 rates differ from rates published in *Changes in Criminal Victimization, 1994-95* (NCJ 162032), which are based on data years. The regression coefficient (*b*) — the average annual change, 1993-99 — is based on a linear trend test.
See *Survey methodology* for further information.
*1993-99 difference is significant at the 95% confidence level.

Criminal victimization, 1998 to 1999

Violent crime

The NCVS collects data on reported and unreported nonfatal violent crimes against persons age 12 or older in the United States. The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program of the FBI collects data on homicide.

Violent crimes measured by the NCVS

Overall violent victimization includes rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault and simple assault. Between 1998 and 1999, overall violent crime fell 10% from 37 to 33 victimizations per 1,000 persons (table 1). Declines in both attempted and completed violent crimes contributed to the decrease in overall violence during this period.

Simple assault was the only of the 4 major components of overall violent crime to decrease significantly between 1998 and 1999. Apparent decreases in robbery and aggravated assault were not significant. However, two decreases emerged in specific subcategories of violent crime. Aggravated assault with injury decreased slightly, and completed robbery without injury fell significantly from 1998-99.

Violent crime rates fell for many of the demographic groups considered between 1998 and 1999. The rate at which males, whites, and non-Hispanic persons were victimized decreased between 1998 and 1999.

	Number of violent crimes per 1,000 persons age 12 or older	
	1998	1999
Male	43.1	37.0*
Female	30.4	28.8
White	36.3	31.9*
Black	41.7	41.6
Other	27.6	24.5
Hispanic	32.8	33.8
Non-Hispanic	36.8	32.4*

*1998-99 difference is significant at the 95% confidence level.

Table 1. Criminal victimization, 1998-99

Type of crime	Number of victimizations (1,000's) 1998	1999	Victimization rates (per 1,000 persons age 12 or older or per 1,000 households) 1998	1999	Percent change, 1998-99
All crimes	31,307	28,780	. . .	. . .	
Personal crimes[a]	8,412	7,565	37.9	33.7	-11.1%*
Crimes of violence	8,116	7,357	36.6	32.8	-10.4*
Completed violence	2,564	2,278	11.6	10.1	-12.9*
Attempted/threatened violence	5,553	5,079	25.0	22.6	-9.6*
Rape/Sexual assault	333	383	1.5	1.7	13.3
Rape/attempted rape	200	201	0.9	0.9	0.0
Rape	110	141	0.5	0.6	20.0
Attempted rape	89	60	0.4	0.3	-25.0
Sexual assault	133	182	0.6	0.8	33.3
Robbery	886	810	4.0	3.6	-10.0
Completed/property taken	610	530	2.7	2.4	-11.1
With injury	170	189	0.8	0.8	0.0
Without injury	439	341	2.0	1.5	-25.0*
Attempted to take property	277	280	1.2	1.2	0.0
With injury	70	78	0.3	0.3	0.0
Without injury	207	202	0.9	0.9	0.0
Assault	6,897	6,164	31.1	27.4	-11.9*
Aggravated	1,674	1,503	7.5	6.7	-10.7
With injury	547	449	2.5	2.0	-20.0‡
Threatened with weapon	1,126	1,054	5.1	4.7	-7.8
Simple	5,224	4,660	23.5	20.8	-11.5*
With minor injury	1,175	998	5.3	4.4	-17.0*
Without injury	4,048	3,662	18.2	16.3	-10.4*
Personal theft[b]	296	208	1.3	0.9	-30.8*
Property crimes	22,895	21,215	217.4	198.0	-8.9%*
Household burglary	4,054	3,652	38.5	34.1	-11.4*
Completed	3,380	3,064	32.1	28.6	-10.9*
Forcible entry	1,310	1,175	12.4	11.0	-11.3‡
Unlawful entry without force	2,070	1,890	19.7	17.6	-10.7‡
Attempted forcible entry	674	587	6.4	5.5	-14.1
Motor vehicle theft	1,138	1,068	10.8	10.0	-7.4
Completed	822	808	7.8	7.5	-3.8
Attempted	316	260	3.0	2.4	-20.0‡
Theft	17,703	16,495	168.1	153.9	-8.4*
Completed[c]	17,074	15,964	162.1	149.0	-8.1*
Less than $50	6,169	5,700	58.6	53.2	-9.2*
$50-$249	6,083	5,789	57.8	54.0	-6.6‡
$250 or more	3,693	3,394	35.1	31.7	-9.7*
Attempted	629	532	6.0	5.0	-16.7‡

Note: Completed violent crimes include rape, sexual assault, robbery with or without injury, aggravated assault with injury, and simple assault with minor injury. The total population age 12 or older was 221,880,960 in 1998 and 224,568,370 in 1999. The total number of households was 105,322,920 in 1998 and 107,159,550 in 1999.
. . .Not applicable.
*The difference from 1998 to 1999 is significant at the 95% confidence level.
‡The difference from 1998 to 1999 is significant at the 90% confidence level.
[a]The NCVS is based on interviews with victims and therefore cannot measure murder.
[b]Includes pocket picking, purse snatching, and attempted purse snatching.
[c]Includes thefts with unknown losses.

The slight difference between white and black overall violent crime rates evident in 1998 grew to a significant difference in 1999.

Violent victimization rates fell among several of the age groups that historically have experienced the highest rates of violence.

	Number of violent crimes per 1,000 persons age 12 or older	
	1998	1999
12-15 years	82.4	74.4
16-19 years	91.1	77.4*
20-24 years	67.3	68.5
25-34 years	41.5	36.3‡
35-49 years	29.9	25.2*
50-64 years	15.4	14.4
65+ years	2.8	3.8

1998-99 difference is significant at the —
*95% confidence level
‡90% confidence level.

Persons age 16 to 19 and 35 to 49 experienced violence at rates significantly lower in 1999 than they did in 1998. Persons age 25 to 34 were victimized in 1999 at rates somewhat lower than they were in 1998.

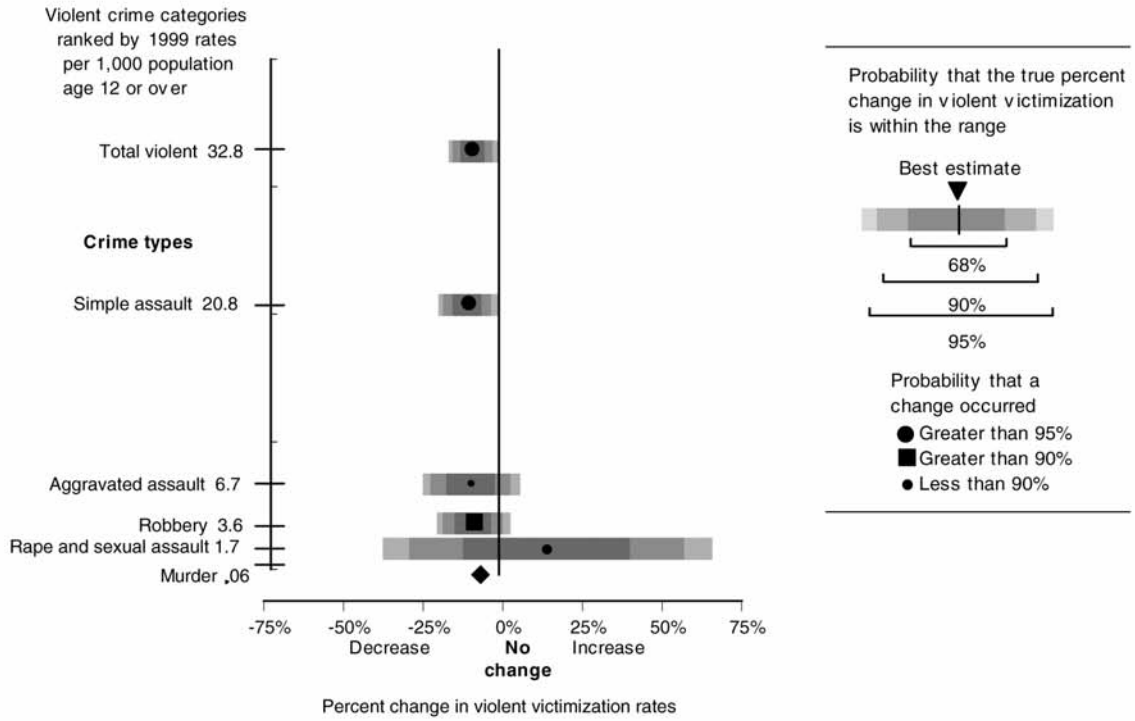
An examination of income and violent crimes demonstrates that violent crime rates declined between 1998-99 for those who have historically experienced the lowest rates of violent victimization — those with the highest annual household incomes. Persons residing in households with annual incomes of greater than $75,000 experienced violent crime at lower rates in 1999 than they did in 1998.

	Number of violent crimes per 1,000 persons age 12 or older	
	1998	1999
Less than $7,500	63.8	57.5
$7,500-$14,999	49.3	44.5
$15,000-$24,999	39.4	35.3
$25,000-$34,999	42.0	37.9
$35,000-$49,999	31.7	30.3
$50,000-$74,999	32.0	33.3
$75,000 plus	33.1	22.9*

*1998-99 difference is significant at the 95% confidence level.

Change in violent victimization, by category, 1998-99

Annual percent change in violent victimization by category, 1998-99



Note: The change in murder rates is presented as a point because the source of the data, the Uniform Crime Reports, is not a sample survey. 1999 homicide data are preliminary.
For further explanation of the graph, see the BJS Technical Report *Displaying Violent Crime Trends Using Estimates from the National Crime Victimization Survey*, NCJ 167881.
*The murder rates were for all ages.

Sources: BJS, National Crime Victimization Survey, and FBI, Uniform Crime Reports.

The figure shows the estimated annual percentage change in victimization rates from 1998 to 1999 for the categories that comprise violent crime: homicide, rape and sexual assault, aggravated assault, simple assault, and robbery. The crime categories are displayed vertically according to their 1999 rates per 1,000 population age 12 or older. Total violent (the sum of all types) is first with the highest rate, and murder is last with the lowest rate.

Because the National Crime Victimization Survey relies on a sample of households, the rates and numbers from it are estimates and are not exact. Each bar shows the range within which the true percent change in rates from year to year is likely to fall.

If a bar is clear of the "No change" line, we are reasonably certain a change occurred. If a bar crosses the "No change" line, there is a possibility that there was no change. The degree of certainty depends on where the bar crosses the line. The bars representing the crime categories in which a statistically significant year-to-year change occurred are outlined.

The length of the range bars varies considerably from crime to crime, dependent on sample size and rarity of the event. The preliminary value for the change in homicide rates is given as a point and not a range of estimates because homicide rates are derived from nonsample data. The murder rates have no variance, but some discrepancies exist between UCR rates and *Vital Statistics* of the National Center for Health Statistics.

Violent crime rates were similar in 1998 and 1999 among persons in the Northeast and South. For people in the West — the area that historically has experienced the highest victimization rates — victimization rates fell significantly from 47 to 37 victimizations per 1,000 persons. Persons living in the Midwest experienced violent crimes at somewhat lower rates in 1999 than in 1998 (40 versus 36 violent victimizations per 1,000 persons).

	Number of violent crimes per 1,000 persons age 12 or older	
	1998	1999
Northeast	31.1	29.6
Midwest	40.2	35.5‡
South	31.0	30.2
West	46.7	36.9*

1998-99 difference is significant at the —
*95% confidence level
‡90% confidence level.

Urbanites experienced violent victimization at rates significantly lower in 1999 than they did in 1998 (46 versus 40 per 1,000 urbanites).

	Number of violent crimes per 1,000 persons age 12 or older	
	1998	1999
Urban	46.3	39.8*
Suburban	35.5	32.8
Rural	27.6	24.9

*1998-99 difference is significant at the 95% confidence level.

Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter measured by the UCR

Preliminary estimates from the UCR program of the FBI suggest that the number of murders declined about 8% between 1998 and 1999. Among regions, preliminary estimates suggest a decline in the number of murders of 10% in the South (the largest decline) and a 4% decline in the Northeast (the smallest decline). The Midwest and West each saw declines of 7%. See text box for more information.

Property crime

In the NCVS, property crime includes burglary, motor vehicle theft, and theft. Between 1998 and 1999, overall property crime rates fell 9% from 217 to 198 incidents per 1,000 households (table 1). The decline in overall property crime rates is explained by significant decreases in burglary and theft during this period.

Burglary rates fell 11% from 39 to 34 victimizations between 1998 and 1999 due primarily to a significant decrease in completed burglary. Theft rates decreased 8% from 1998 to 1999 (168 to 154 thefts per 1,000 households).

Property crime rates declined between 1998 and 1999 for several of the demographic groups examined. The overall property crime rate fell from 213 to 190 property victimizations per 1,000 households for white households. Fewer property victimizations occurred among both Hispanic and non-Hispanic households in 1999 than in 1998.

	Number of property crimes per 1,000 households	
	1998	1999
White	212.6	190.0*
Black	248.0	249.9
Other	224.5	206.3
Hispanic	267.6	232.5*
Non-Hispanic	212.5	194.6*

*1998-99 difference is significant at the 95% confidence level.

Households in most income categories experienced property crime in 1999 at rates lower than those in 1998. Households with annual incomes between $7,500 and $14,999, between $25,000 and $34,999, and greater than $50,000 were victims of property crime at lower rates in 1999 than in 1998.

	Number of property crimes per 1,000 households	
	1998	1999
Less than $7,500	209.0	220.8
$7,500-$14,999	229.8	200.1*
$15,000-$24,999	211.0	214.9
$25,000-$34,999	233.8	199.1*
$35,000-$49,999	221.7	207.6‡
$50,000-$74,999	248.6	213.6*
$75,000 or more	248.6	220.4*

*1998-99 difference is significant at the 95% confidence level.

People in the Midwest, South, and West experienced less property crime in 1999 than they did in 1998. Those in the West — the area with the highest rate of property crime historically — experienced a 14% decrease in

Murder in the United States, 1999

Statistics on murder are compiled from over 16,000 city, county, and State law enforcement agencies as part of the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). In 1998 the UCR program stated that 16,914 murders occurred in the United States. Preliminary 1999 UCR data suggest about an 8% drop in the number of murders in the United States, resulting in an estimated 15,561 murders during 1999.

The FBI defines murder in its annual Crime in the United States as the willful, nonnegligent killing of one human being by another. The incidence of murder varies across victim characteristics. The relationship between victim characteristics and homicide victims has remained stable year after year.

- Males account for about three-quarters of all murder victims.
- White and black persons each account for almost half of all homicide victims.
- About 1 in 8 people murdered are less than 18 years of age.
- Firearms are used in about 7 in 10 homicides.
- Homicide rates tend to be the highest in the South and the lowest in the Northeast.
- Metropolitan cities experience homicide in higher rates than smaller cities and rural areas.

property crime rates between 1998 and 1999 (282 versus 243 property crimes per 1,000 households).

	Number of property crimes per 1,000 households	
	1998	1999
Northeast	159.3	159.5
Midwest	214.0	199.9*
South	213.5	191.4*
West	282.3	243.1*
Urban	274.2	256.3*
Suburban	204.5	181.4*
Rural	173.5	159.8‡
Home owned	189.6	170.4*
Home rented	270.6	251.9*

1998-99 difference is significant at the —
*95% confidence level
‡90% confidence level.

Urban and suburban households experienced significantly lower, and rural households sustained slightly lower rates of property crime in 1999 compared to 1998. Property crime rates fell during the same period for persons who owned and persons who rented their home.

Characteristics of violent crime victims, 1999

The well-documented relationship between victimization and demographics was demonstrated in 1999 (table 2). Violent crime rates show that groups that were most vulnerable to victimization in the past continued to be most vulnerable in 1999.

Gender of victim

Males were victims of overall violent crime, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault at rates higher than females in 1999. Males experienced violent crime at rates 28% greater (37 compared to 29 victimizations per 1,000), and were robbed at rates more than 2 times that (5 compared to 2 robberies per 1,000) of females. Females were victims of rape and sexual assault at 7.5 times greater the rate of males. During 1999, 3 females in contrast to 0.4 males per 1,000 were raped or sexually assaulted.

Age of victim

In 1999 persons age 12-15, 16-19, and 20-24 experienced similar rates of overall violent victimization (74, 77, and 69 victimizations per 1,000 persons, respectively). These youngest persons sustained violent crime at rates higher than persons in all other age categories. Among persons ages 25 or older, violent victimization rates decreased as age increased. For example, 36 persons age 25-34 compared to 4 persons age 65 or older per 1,000 were victimized during 1999.

Race of victim

Blacks were victims of overall violent crime in 1999 at rates higher than whites and than other races considered together.* Forty-two blacks, 32 whites, and 25 persons of other races per 1,000 were victimized during this time. Blacks experienced rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault at higher rates than whites. Compared to persons of other races considered together, blacks were more likely to experience overall violent crime and simple assault. Whites experienced overall violent crime, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault at higher rates than persons of other races taken as a whole.

*"Other races" refers to an aggregation including Asians, Native Hawaiians, other Pacific Islanders, Alaska Natives, and American Indians.

Ethnicity of victim

Non-Hispanics and Hispanics were victims of overall violent crime and rape or sexual assault at similar rates in 1999. Non-Hispanics were slightly more likely to become a victim of a simple assault, while Hispanics were more likely to become a victim of a robbery and an aggravated assault during the same period.

Table 2. Rates of violent crime and personal theft, by gender, age, race, and Hispanic origin, 1999

		Victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older						
		Violent crimes						
					Assault			
Characteristic of victim	Population	All crimes of violence*	Rape/ Sexual assault	Robbery	Total	Aggravated	Simple	Personal theft
Gender								
Male	108,652,550	37.0	0.4	5.0	31.6	8.7	22.9	0.9
Female	115,915,820	28.8	3.0	2.3	23.6	4.8	18.8	0.9
Age								
12-15	15,920,740	74.4	4.0	6.7	63.7	13.1	50.6	3.1
16-19	15,925,090	77.4	6.9	8.2	62.3	16.8	45.5	1.5
20-24	18,067,050	68.5	4.3	7.7	56.4	16.7	39.7	1.0
25-34	38,470,320	36.3	1.7	4.1	30.5	8.3	22.2	1.2
35-49	64,329,680	25.2	0.8	2.8	21.6	4.7	16.9	0.4
50-64	39,371,500	14.4	0.2	1.9	12.3	1.8	10.5	0.6
65 or older	32,483,990	3.8	0.1	0.7	3.0	1.1	1.9	0.6
Race								
White	187,576,000	31.9	1.6	3.1	27.2	6.2	21.1	0.8
Black	27,539,830	41.6	2.6	7.7	31.3	10.6	20.8	1.3
Other	9,452,540	24.5	1.7	2.5	20.3	5.7	14.6	1.5
Hispanic origin								
Hispanic	22,966,050	33.8	1.9	5.6	26.3	8.9	17.4	1.5
Non-Hispanic	199,116,660	32.4	1.7	3.4	27.3	6.4	20.9	0.9

*The National Crime Victimization Survey includes as violent crime rape/sexual assault, robbery, and assault, but not murder and manslaughter.

CHAPTER 2

SIMPLE

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Simplicity is about finding your core message and sharing it in a compact way. The core message is the single most important thing you have to communicate. The Army has a core message for its battle plans called "Commander's Intent." Smart companies like Southwest Airlines have core strategic messages, such as "THE low-fare airline." Journalists use the "inverted pyramid" model to write their stories, putting the most important information at the top of the article.

Why is finding the core hard? It's painful to leave behind ideas that are interesting and important but that aren't *the most important* idea. Yet it's critical to find the core, to prioritize ideas, because of decision paralysis. Decision paralysis leads people to make bad choices when they are confronted with too many choices, and it can be overcome via simplicity (as in the Southwest example).

Simple is about prioritization, and it's also about saying a lot with a little. You can say a lot with a little by using analogies. Think about Hollywood high-concept pitches (*Speed* is "*Die Hard* on a bus"). Rather than teaching people ideas from scratch, you can tap into what they already know by using "schemas." (See pp. 53–55 for an illustration of schemas using the "pomelo" fruit.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Someone complains, "I hate simple ideas because they're dumbed down." Respond. (Students could talk about the value of simplicity in guiding action—e.g., the cases of too much choice causing people to delay choosing or not choosing at all, Commander's Intent in guiding decisions in a dynamic situation, etc.)
2. Is it harder to be simple or complex? Why does it hurt to be simple? Have you ever struggled to make something simple for someone else?
3. Are sound bites good or bad? (Solicit examples of useful and oversimplified sound bites.)
4. In what sense is Hoover Adams' concept of "names, names, names" simple? How does it help people make decisions? What specific decisions might it influence?
5. Have you ever personally experienced decision paralysis? What was the situation?
6. [Refer to the PalmPilot visual proverb example, pp. 48–50.] In what sense is a block of wood a "visual proverb"?
7. What is a generative analogy? How does Disney use one?
8. What is the most overcomplicated communication you've seen or heard recently? How would you go about fixing it using some of the techniques from this chapter?

ACTIVITIES/EXERCISES

1. **Finding the core idea.**
   a. The core idea of Southwest is to be THE low-fare airline. What do you think the core idea for Apple might be? Disney? The United States? College?

2. **The time traveler's high-concept pitch.**
   a. Imagine that you are transported back in time to 1850. Find an analogy that might help someone in 1850 understand the following modern concepts: television, cars, a department store, Starbucks®, the phonograph, deodorant. For inspiration, think of the way cars were pitched as "horseless carriages"—that's a brilliant high-concept pitch!

3. **Reverse-engineer high-concept pitches.**
   a. The book gives some examples of Hollywood high-concept pitches. Give some current movies and ask the students to speculate what the high-concept pitch might have been.

4. **Names, names, names.**
   a. Pick out a local business (a coffee shop or music store or boutique). If you were the manager of that store, what would be the core message you'd circulate to employees, à la Hoover Adams's "names, names, names"? Talk about some of the decisions they'd have to make every day and the way that your idea would help them make those decisions.

EXPANDED ACTIVITY

High concept pitch for a new product

This exercise works well for a number of audiences. It is a quick, 20–25 minute exercise that fosters a lot of interesting insights and discussion, and students see a dramatic improvement in an idea very quickly.

Students are assigned to brainstorm a high-concept pitch for a CFL-light bulb (compact fluorescent light bulb). These are the environmentally friendly light bulbs that look like the image to the right:

These light bulbs last much longer than standard light bulbs (7 years versus 1 for a standard bulb) and they consume up to 75% less electricity when they're operating. Nonetheless, they also cost substantially more than regular lightbulbs (say $5–$6 apiece, versus $3 for a four-pack of standard bulbs).

Good ideas from previous groups:

- "It's the Prius of light bulbs." This analogy works if people know the Toyota Prius. If so, the message is simple because the Prius has staked out the environmental high-ground in the car market, it's concrete because people can picture the Prius, and it's somewhat emotional because of the positive associations of the Prius.
- "It's like finally fixing that leaky faucet." This is highly emotional because of the feelings of frustration we get from dealing with a leaky appliance. It's incredibly concrete, filled with visuals and built in audio (drip, drip, drip). And, compared with other analogies such as the Prius that are only known by some audiences, it's much simpler because it relies on a common experience that all of us have had. It's also more unexpected because the Prius is a known "environmental" product, but going for the plumbing is less predictable.
- "It's like buying dishes versus using plastic plates." This one is a simple analogy that everyone can relate to. We do spend more to buy plates for our homes because they last longer and have aesthetic advantages over paper plates. And the waste and concrete visuals associated with stacks of dirty paper plates makes the environmentally-friendly point in a nice emotional way.

Structure of the exercise: Give people about 2 minutes to brainstorm individually, then have them get together with a group of three or four people around where they are sitting and give them another 7 minutes to come up with their favorite idea for their group.

Call on each group and write their idea on the board. Generally there is a lot of laughter and "oh" sounds when groups come up with good ideas (and nervous, embarrassed laughter when a group's idea is bizarre). After all the ideas go up on the board, ask everyone to vote for one favorite idea (they can't vote for their own idea). Then spend some time discussing the top two or three ideas. All of the top ideas will make use of some parts of the SUCCES framework, but they will differ on:

- Simple: Some ideas, like the Prius, may use an analogy that is powerful but only for a limited segment of people.
- Emotional: Some ideas will do better at capturing the frustration of the waste of the old light bulbs (both in terms of wasted electricity and the hassle of replacing them every year or so).

CHAPTER 3

UNEXPECTED

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Unexpectedness is about grabbing people's attention. You can grab people's attention by surprising them, and an easy way to surprise them is to break a pattern (the way car alarms get our attention by cycling their annoying sound patterns). You can surprise people by violating their expectations or forcing their "guessing machines" to miss a guess. (For example, the way that Nordstrom employees are told stories about "the Nordie who ironed a shirt for a customer who needed to wear it that afternoon." That breaks the employee's schema of customer service.) Surprise is an emotion that forces us to pause to collect more information about the world. Surprise can be gimmicky—think of dot-com ads—but it is powerful when used in the service of a core message. (See the Nora Ephron story "There is no school next Thursday" for an example, pp. 75–76.)

Surprise gets people's attention in the moment, and curiosity holds their attention over time. How do you spark curiosity? The "gap theory" of curiosity holds that curiosity comes from a gap between what we know and what we want to know. These gaps cause us a kind of pain—we want to fill them. Hollywood screenplays string us along in this way, but the same technique works in college classes, as when a teacher started his class with the mystery, "What are Saturn's rings made of?" Curiosity gaps can work in the long-term: Sony's 1950s quest for a "pocketable radio" kept its engineers busy for years, and JFK's "man on the moon" speech kept a nation busy for a decade.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is surprise a useful emotion?
2. What does "post-dictable" mean? Can you think of any commercials or books that had unexpected endings that were post-dictable (or not post-dictable)?
3. (This one builds on the ideas introduced in the book by the Journalism 101 example from Nora Ephron.) Think of your best teacher and something you learned from him or her. How did this teacher get your attention and get you to change your ideas about the world?
4. What's an example you've seen recently of "gimmicky surprise"?
5. What is the "gap theory" of curiosity? What's an example of a knowledge gap? Advanced question: Is the "gap theory" the same thing as simply asking a question? (Answer: No. Lots of questions don't relate to things that we know, for example, "Who was the most effective president of Iceland?" Others relate to things we don't want to know, such as, "What's the keyboard shortcut for left-justifying a column of text in Word?")
6. When was the last time a movie or television show had you hanging on the edge of your seat? What were the knowledge gaps it set up?
7. What did Roone Arledge do to make sports broadcasts stickier?
8. What made the Nintendo® Wii™ sticky? (If prompting is needed, ask, "What schema was violated by the Nintendo Wii?" Answer: The schema that characters' movements are controlled via a joystick, connected to the console via a cord, etc.)

ACTIVITIES/EXERCISES

1. **Violating schemas.**
   a. Let's say you are promoting an event, and you want to grab people's attention. You're going to do it by

violating people's schemas. Let's take a series of possible events, talk about our schemas of those events, and then figure out how to subvert them. Examples:

i. A picnic. Our schema includes: Fried chicken, wine & cheese, crackers, potato salad, picnic baskets, sitting on a red-and-white-checked picnic blanket, fear of ants, fear of rain, etc.
   I. Ideas for violating our picnic schema: A picnic where you eat ants. A picnic in the rain. An indoor picnic. A picnic where you sit inside a giant basket. Etc.

ii. A movie. Our schema includes: The theater, big screen, rows of seats, popcorn, darkened lighting, etc.
   I. Ideas for violating the movie schema: Movies played backwards! Movies projected on the ceiling—people laying on mattresses staring upward. Movies where you can throw food at the screen. The "gong show" movie—you can vote a movie off the screen by booing, etc.

2. **Uncommon sense made common.**
   a. Take a series of unexpected/surprising messages and make them sound like common sense, e.g., "You only use 10% of your brain" turns into "None of us make use of our brain's entire capacity." A medium-sized popcorn has as much fat as a day's worth of gluttony (see Chapter 1) can be transformed into, "A medium-sized popcorn has a lot of saturated fat due to the coconut oil."

3. **Manufactured morals.**
   a. Ask for some of the silliest, gimmickiest advertisements people have seen. Have students describe the ads. Make the point that the gimmicks do not reinforce the core message of the products/services being advertised. Then, ask the class to speculate on the following question: Would these ads have been brilliant if the core message had been _____? For example, on p. 69, we discuss the dot-com ads where a pack of wolves is unleashed on a marching band. That ad would have been brilliant if the core message were, "Our band uniforms are bite-proof." The famous ad where Christopher Reeve is "cured" and stands up from his wheelchair would have been brilliant if it advertised a new spinal-reconstruction therapy. (It was actually an ad for Nuveen Investments, by the way.)

EXPANDED ACTIVITY

The Curiosity Marketplace

This exercise takes 1–1.5 hours. Students work on pitching an idea so that their classmates become curious to know more. The class votes to determine which pitches they want to hear more of, thus demonstrating that it's possible to make people *want* to know information. Here's a sample pitch from a clever student in one of our previous classes:

The secret muffin ingredient. "How many of you have had one of those wonderful, large breakfast muffins from a great bakery? (Smiles and nods, at this point the student took out a wonderful bakery-quality muffin and held it up as a demo.) Well, you may have made muffins in your own home, but they never turn out that great. The top is pretty much like the bottom and all of it is pretty soggy and uninspiring compared to what you get in the store. Well what if I told you that there's one simple, secret ingredient, that you can add to your muffins to get those luscious professional bakery tops? And furthermore, what if I told you that the ingredient is inexpensive, and may already be in your home in your refrigerator? In fact, I baked this muffin, in my own oven, with that very ingredient. But if you don't know the secret muffin ingredient, you have to pay more for your muffins and you can never have the pleasure of taking out of your own oven a perfect, mouth-watering, crusty muffin that will please your stomach and impress your friends." (At this point she took a bite of her home-baked muffin and everyone else in the class salivated.) Not surprisingly, this pitch collected lots of votes. [The answer, by the way, was to replace the oil in the muffin recipe with yogurt.]

Setup

Initial pre-class assignment. Come to class prepared to make a knowledge gap pitch to your classmates. The goal is to make your classmates want to hear some information you can talk about. Your message should be informational, not just a joke or a riddle or a brain-teaser. People should feel like they've learned something useful after they hear your message.

For example, here's a pitch you might deliver based on topics in the book:

People always say "you can't make people pay attention," yet lots of people would love to understand how to make people pay attention—ranging from advertisers to teachers. It turns out that conventional wisdom is wrong—you *can* make people pay attention. But to understand how, you need to know a little bit about the biology of surprise and a little about uncommon sense . . .

In your message you could talk about breaking existing schemas and illustrate with the Nordie stories or "There is no school next Thursday."

You'll make a short pitch for your idea and people will vote how much they want to hear your message. If your pitch collects enough votes, we'll let you deliver your message and fill the knowledge gap (your messages should be relatively short—two minutes or so max). We'll take another vote about how satisfied people are with your overall message. Remember that it's easy to make people curious but harder to close the curiosity gap in a way that leaves people satisfied with the experience. So don't create curiosity gaps that you won't be able to fill.

Class intro: I highlight at the beginning of class that "We often think we can't make people pay attention. Can't make people want to learn. But both are false. In this exercise some of your classmates will make you *want* to know some information they have. Imagine the consequences if you could master this technique. Instead of working constantly to keep people's attention, everyone is hanging on your every word because they *want* to know what you're saying."

Procedure

Small group pitches. (About 25 minutes). Students number off and select into groups of 7 or 8. Each group member presents their knowledge gap pitch (since this is not a memory exercise, students can be free to take notes). After everyone has made their pitch, the group votes on who they would most like to hear. The top vote-getter is a finalist and is promoted to the class super-round, but to maintain the knowledge gap they do *not* give their informational speech to their group. With whatever time the group has left before returning to class, the group can hear the informational speech of the second-highest vote getter, third-highest, etc.

Class-wide pitches by finalists. (About 20 minutes). Once class is re-assembled, the finalist from each group gives his or her knowledge gap pitch. The class then votes for their favorite. At this point, the expectation has been set based on the first round that only the *top* vote-getter will give his or her informational speech. I make a show of looking at my watch and thinking for a moment, then say "I think we'll have enough time to hear the full speeches from each of the finalists." At that point there is always a spontaneous eruption of glee and scattered applause. At that point, your job as a teacher is done. I say, "Notice what just happened. You were *excited* that you were going to get to learn from each of these people. They each made you want to know something. That's the main point for the day: If we think hard about how to create knowledge gaps, we can make people want to hear what we have to say."

Discussion and debrief. (25 minutes). Ask people to reflect on what people did well at motivating curiosity. The principles can be organized as follows:

- Crystallize knowledge. You first need to highlight something that people already know. People want to know more about things they already know something about. Remind them of things they have learned, seen, or observed, e.g. in the "secret muffin ingredient" pitch above, the student highlighted the wonderful (concrete) experience of that crusty muffin top from high-end bakeries.
- Highlight the gap. Then point out to people what they do *not* know. Point out some puzzle, paradox, or contradiction in their knowledge. You don't know how to make crusty muffins on your own. But the secret ingredient is probably already in your fridge!

- (**Optional**) Highlight consequences of the gap. If you do the first two right, this one can be omitted but it adds force. Highlight the costs of not knowing the information you are offering, and the potential benefits of having it. You can increase the consequences of the gap by making the answer seem scarce, something that people are only going to learn from you right now. If you don't know the secret muffin ingredient, you'll never have great muffins in your own home.

The mistakes that people make can also be organized around these principles.

- Crystallize knowledge. People often fail in their pitches by referring to people, things, or experiences that their audience wasn't familiar with.
- Highlight the gap. As the book discusses, knowledge gaps are painful so people don't want to think about a gap that is likely to remain unfilled.
- Many people failed by making the gap so big that people don't think the gap will ever be closed. One low vote-getter promised he had the solution to "never being sick again" and people weren't convinced that he could deliver. To address this, you could do things to increase credibility. You can build trust by opening one gap, filling it with some interesting information, then opening another, bigger gap. People also use tactics that increase credibility, e.g., "new studies have shown . . . " One product designer who was pitching a new product that sounded impossibly good said, "Google ordered 10,000."
- You can fail to highlight a gap by making the answer seem too well-known. One person promised to tell people how to avoid losing money in Vegas. He was pitching a strategy at Blackjack but people thought he was going to tell them not to gamble.
- Highlight consequences of the gap. Some students try to set up gaps based on a personal anecdote or story that didn't have wide relevance.

Question: Was there anything you were disappointed by once you heard someone's speech? Many times students manage to set up compelling knowledge gaps, but then can't deliver an equally compelling message.

CHAPTER 4

CONCRETE

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Sticky ideas are usually concrete—they are expressed in sensory language. "A bathtub full of ice" in the Kidney Theft legend is a phrase you can visualize (and almost feel). Aesop's Fables are great examples of abstract moral truths made concrete (e.g., the abstract lesson to "tell the truth" becomes "The Boy Who Cried Wolf"). The distinguishing trait of concrete ideas is that you can picture them in your head. For instance, an accounting class was taught using a soap opera tracing the path of a startup company and its co-founders. This grounded the concepts of accounting into the actions of specific people.

The "Velcro theory of memory" says that the more "hooks" we can put into an idea, the stickier it will be. (See pp. 109–111 for a summary of different types of memory.) The teacher Jane Elliott made her students *experience* prejudice with her simulation where she declared the blue-eyed kids to be superior (and later reversed it).

Concreteness not only helps people understand ideas, it helps them coordinate. The Boeing 727 was designed to land on Runway 4–22 at LaGuardia—that ensures that all the engineers are working toward the same goal. Concreteness allows people to share a common language.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to say that something is "concrete"? What are some examples of abstract and concrete language?
2. Why does concrete information help people understand better? Remember better? Why are simulations so powerful?
3. What are the abstract morals underlying some of Aesop's Fables? (You can use "The Boy Who Cried Wolf", the "Fox and the Grapes", the "Tortoise and the Hare", or others.)
4. What is the Velcro Theory of Memory? Follow-up questions: What hooks did the professors at Georgia State build into their *Safe Night Out* case study of Kris and Sandy? What hooks did Stone-Yamashita build into their exhibit of the Ferraris go to Disney?
5. How could you make better use of the Velcro Theory of Memory in some of your classes? (Fish for examples of experiential learning.)
6. Why was it more effective for James Grant to show policymakers a packet of sugar and salt than for him to talk about how Oral Rehydration Therapy can prevent life-threatening dehydration?
7. Should your résumé be abstract or concrete?
8. The book makes a big deal of the entrepreneur who throws a maroon portfolio on the table during his VC pitch. What exactly did this accomplish? Do you buy that this was a smart thing to do?
9. Why does the Curse of Knowledge lead us to make arguments that are too abstract?

ACTIVITIES/EXERCISES

1. **English-to-alien translation.**
   a. You have been visited by a space alien who is from a race of people who can't understand abstractions. They can only understand things they can observe directly (whether in person or via video). Write down what concrete images you could show them to help explain to the alien what is meant by the following terms:
      i. Democracy. Examples: Ballots, voting by raising hands, scenes from Congress, etc.
      ii. Justice. Examples: Video of an assault, followed by video of the same offender being put behind bars.
      iii. Friendship. Examples: One person carrying something heavy for another person. Two people walking side by side.

2. **Being Aesop.**
   a. Come up with an Aesop-esque story (i.e., involving foxes or hares or people) that illustrates one of the following morals:
      i. Pay attention when people are talking to you.
      ii. Don't drink too much.
      iii. Respect your elders.
      iv. Don't cheat.

3. **Setting concrete goals.**
   a. Using the Boeing example in the book as inspiration, make the following goals more concrete:
      i. Goal: To get more fit. (Example: I want to be able to run 25 minutes on the elliptical trainer by June 30th without exceeding 95% of my max heart rate. Or, I want to weigh 118 pounds or less by August 1st while wearing my birthday suit.)

ii. Goal: To serve the best coffee in town. (Example: 2 out of 3 people picked at random will prefer our coffee to the competition when served in a blind taste test. Or, our coffee will be served at 120 degrees, it will be no older than 30 minutes when served, and it will be made of Colombian Arabica beans.)

iii. Goal: To be better at math.

iv. Goal: To be a better person.

CHAPTER 5

CREDIBLE

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Credibility makes people believe your ideas. When trying to establish our credibility, we instinctively reach for authorities (Oprah, Dr. Koop). But sometimes antiauthorities work just as well (for example, Pam Laffin, the heavy smoker who now appears in anti-smoking ads).

When trying to establish credibility we also tend to make heavy use of data (statistics, charts). But there are lots of other ways to make ideas credible. We can use convincing details. We can find an example that passes the "Sinatra Test" (if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere); for instance, an Indian shipping company that handled the Harry Potter book launch could be considered credible for any shipping job.

When you must use statistics, you should try to use the "human-scale principle" to make them easy to understand. For instance, an anti-nuclear-weapons group used sound to represent the world's nuclear arsenal: The sound of one BB, dropped in a bucket, represented Hiroshima. The sound of 5,000 BBs, ricocheting around in the bucket, symbolized the massive expansion in nuclear scale.

Finally, you can "outsource" your idea's credibility to the audience using a "testable credential." For instance, in the 1980 presidential debate, Ronald Reagan, instead of using statistics, asked, "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When we want to convince someone of something, what techniques do we use to convince them? Why do people often overuse appeals to authorities?
2. How did the CSPI make its argument against high-fat popcorn credible? (From the Intro chapter.)
3. Who would be an authority to reinforce the value of a college education? Who would be an anti-authority to make the same point?
4. What is the Sinatra Test? What Sinatra Test could you provide to an employer to prove that you'd make a good employee? What would be your best Sinatra Test story if you were applying for a job as a lawyer? A job in Hollywood? A job working for major league baseball? [This is to reinforce that different pieces of evidence will be most relevant for different positions.]
5. How did the NBA get its rookie players to take AIDS seriously? What elements of the SUCCES framework did that experience contain? (Answer: all of them. It can be useful to unpack each one as a review.)
6. How do urban legends manage to convince us that they are credible, even though they are false? More broadly, why do we believe false ideas?

ACTIVITIES/EXERCISES

1. **The Lonely Scientist.**
   a. You've discovered a simple drink that cures the flu. How will you convince other people to believe your discovery? What techniques could you use? Prepare a game plan for 3 different scenarios:
      i. You are meeting with 5 key scientists in a conference room for half a day.
      ii. You are preparing a TV ad to announce your discovery.
      iii. You are circulating an email that you hope will be forwarded around the web.

2. **Using the Human-Scale Principle.**
   a. Take the following statistics and make them more easily "graspable" by using what you know about the human-scale principle. (Don't forget that analogies are often a useful human-scale technique.)
      i. 400,000 people die every year from cigarette smoking.
      ii. $500 billion [check current figures] has been spent on the Iraq war.
      iii. The distance between Moscow and Vladivostok in Russia is 3,985 miles.
      iv. Americans spent about $8.4 billion on video games in 2005.

3. **Using Testable Credentials.**
   a. Use a testable credential to make an argument about some change your school needs to make—e.g., people should be safer riding their bicycles, or there should be more study-time built into the final exam schedule. (E.g., if you were arguing about bicycle safety, "Have you ever been walking and heard that chain of a bicyclist rattle behind you and you flinched like there was a snake on the path? That's a sign the bicycle problem on our campus is out of control.")

CHAPTER 6
EMOTIONAL

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Emotional doesn't mean tearjerking or melodramatic—it simply means that, for an idea to stick, it needs to tap into something people care about. One technique is to talk about the consequences of ideas for individuals (rather than their scale); as Mother Teresa said, "If I look at the one, I will act. If I look at the mass, I will not."

To make people care, you can use the power of association—that's what many ads do, by associating products with sex appeal or status. But "semantic stretch" can afflict associations, diluting them until they are meaningless—take the terms "unique," which now means "mildly different," or "sportsmanship," which now means "didn't assault the referee."

Another way to make people care is to appeal to their self-interest. Tell your audience about the WIIFY (What's In It For You). But the WIIFY doesn't have to be simple economic self-interest. We can move up Maslow's hierarchy to more profound motivations, as with the Army mess-hall leader who says his mission isn't to serve food—he's in charge of morale. That's a powerful motivating mission.

There are two ways people make decisions—the first is the consequence model, which is the standard economics model of an individual who makes decisions based on rational self-interest. The other is the identity model, which says that people ask themselves three questions: Who am I? What kind of situation is this?

What does someone like me do in this kind of situation? The "Don't Mess With Texas" campaign achieved huge success by convincing the "Bubbas" that littering the state violated their Texan identity—littering wasn't the Texan thing to do.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the findings of the "Rokia" study conducted by Carnegie Mellon researchers. What causes have you seen that make use of the Mother Teresa principle—that people care about individuals rather than masses?
2. Why is it so difficult to have an emotional reaction to an abstraction?
3. What are the approaches you can use to make people care about an idea? (See the Easy Reference section for a summary of the approaches outlined in the chapter.)
4. What has happened to the word "sportsmanship"? What are your associations with the word? Do you agree it's been diluted? What do you think of the attempt to reclaim the concept with the phrase "Honoring the Game"?
5. This chapter discusses three different ways of creating an emotional message: 1) Association, 2) Self-interest, 3) Identity. Rank order them in terms of how aware people are of using them. (The authors think that awareness looks something like 2, 1, 3. Why are people likely to miss the power of identity? Perhaps it is that we live in an individualistic culture so self-interest is obvious, but many forms of identity are collective—based on the groups we belong to.)
6. What are the two models of decision-making? Give me an example of how you would choose a place to have dinner using each one.
7. The copywriter Caples wrote some doozies: "They laughed when I sat down at the piano—but when I began to play . . . " Would these lines work today? If not, why not? What has changed?
8. Why was it hard for the Murray Dranoff Duo Piano group to articulate why people should care about the duo piano?

ACTIVITIES/EXERCISES

1. **The Car Salesman & The Poverty Fighter.**
    a. Take volunteers to be a car salesman and a fundraiser for a charity that fights poverty. First ask the students to make an appeal using the consequence model.
        i. Example, consequence model, car salesman: "I can give you a great price on this car. You are going to look great in this thing—it will definitely turn heads. The resale value is fantastic, and you'll never have a maintenance problem."
        ii. Example, consequence model, charity fundraiser: "The vast majority of the money we collect goes directly to the poor—we don't spend much on administration, so your money will have more impact with us than with other charities. You will get a tax benefit on your donation. And the money that you give will make you feel great—you'll be helping people in need."
        iii. Example, identity model, car salesman: "I can see you're a person who appreciates design. Take a look at the way they've made the hood more aerodynamic. And you won't believe the interior—see the way they've built everything around the driver's convenience. If you care about design and engineering, this is the car for you—everything else looks clunky in comparison."
        iv. Example, identity model, charity fundraiser: "We've got a duty to the other people in this world who are less fortunate than us. People like us, we've got an obligation to lend a hand, because if we were the ones in poverty, we'd want someone to lend us a hand."

2. **Semantic stretch.**
   a. List words that have become stretched and no longer have an emotional kick. The trick with this exercise is to steer students away from words that are just overly abstract (e.g., reengineering, ecosystem) and toward words that once conveyed some emotional force but have lost it through overuse—e.g., quality, awesome, excellence, "the best," etc.
   b. Then, pick your favorite term that the students have identified as stretched and ask them to brainstorm about a replacement for it that would restore some of its original meaning. (This is inspired by the "Honoring the Game" anecdote in the book.) Note that if they use "exaggerators"—for example, if the stretched word was "awesome" and someone suggests "mega-awesome" as the replacement—then you should point out that this is a great example of semantic stretch in action. "Cool" becomes "awesome" becomes "mega-awesome"—you need more and more "punch" to sustain the original meaning.

3. **Maslow's Fashions.**
   a. Put students in the shoes of a fashion designer selling a new line of clothing. Sketch Maslow's Hierarchy up on the board. Then, starting at the bottom, ask them to market their line of clothes using each level. For example, a pitch using "basic needs" might be "My line of clothes will keep you protected from the elements. You won't be shivering in the winter." Work up to self-actualization: "These clothes are about helping you become the confident, sophisticated person you can be. You'll be at your best wearing this shirt."

EXPANDED ACTIVITY

Tapping Emotion

Students write a mission statement that would inspire an employee of Taco Bell, the IRS, their local garbage collection service or other organizations. Each organization is selected because it has features that may make it tough to find an emotional message that would make employees care: Some are disliked (IRS, insurance firms), some are not respected (garbage collection, local community college), some may seem trivial (Taco Bell, the International Waltz Society).

Procedure

Students are given the assignment before class (see below for wording). You can add to the drama by dividing students into groups the class before, say by last name, and then having groups draw their assignments from a hat. There will be groans when people draw tough assignments like the IRS.

Students bring several copies of their answers to class, one for each member of their group. They should not put their name on their answers; it tends to inhibit discussion when students know who authored the statements they are critiquing.

Small group discussion (10–15 minutes). In groups, students will individually rank the mission statements from best to worst and then take a group vote to establish the group ranking. Then ask them to discuss the following question: "Look across the best mission statements and write down, as a group, the phrases and concepts that work best. Also look across the worst mission statements and write down the phrases and concepts that backfired or should be avoided."

General class discussion (20–30 minutes). In a general class session you will move quickly through the groups and ask them to report what they have discovered. Here are the kinds of insights that come from the exercise:

- It's important to avoid over-claiming. People try to evoke emotions by using concepts and language with strong emotional associations, but sometimes this isn't credible. Taco Bell is *nourishing* or *tasty* Tex-Mex food, but probably not nutritious and it's not real *Mexican* food. The local garbage collection service can make for *cleaner* and *healthier* communities, but it's less credible that it's *saving nature* or *preserving the environment*.

- Emphasize "why" as well as "what." Some students just describe what their organization does and that's typically not very inspiring. The IRS collects taxes but that's pretty negative until you emphasize why they do this: They ensure that money is available for concrete things like *preserving our National Parks, building Interstate highways, feeding hungry children,* and *providing for our nation's defense*.
- IRS—Some students try to avoid negative associations by avoiding the word taxes but others think that's disingenuous. The IRS can also emphasize that it tries to *justly* or *fairly* administer the tax code that the legislature has created.
- Taco Bell—Taco Bell can legitimately claim to be *bolder* and *spicier* than the standard boring burgers and fries. It can claim to be *innovative* because it is constantly developing new products, but that term has been stretched, so it may be better to emphasize that it's *constantly bringing you new flavors*. To avoid overclaiming for what could be seen as trivial fast food, Taco Bell can use humor (e.g., "Think outside the bun") or be self-deprecatory (e.g., think the old Avis campaign, "We're #2 so we try harder").
- State Farm Insurance—There's a great challenge and connection plot here (see Stories chapter)—as a State Farm employee you can help people *recover* from *hardships* or *disasters*. It would be over-claiming to say that State Farm *protects* people from problems but it can help *people bounce back* or *overcome*.
- Local garbage collection service. Emphasize *our neighborhoods* and *our community*. Don't miss the challenge plot: workers need to be *strong* ("we do a tough job that others wouldn't").
- International Waltz Society—Emphasize the connections with history and people across cultures. Dance the dance your grandparents danced, and their grandparents before them. Dance that is danced in many cultures. *Grace* or *elegance* are good concepts to emphasize but are also shared by other art forms. *Romance* is a strong feature of the waltz.

Since similar points come up for several of the organizations (e.g., avoiding overclaiming), it's good to move faster through the later groups as the class starts to recognize common issues.

Initial pre-class assignment. For the organization you have been assigned, come up with a brief two to three sentence mission statement that would inspire an employee of that organization. The mission statement should capture the deep, idealistic principles that motivate people who work for an organization, and it should also inspire others who might want to work for that organization.

Here's an example of a statement a student wrote for a local Community College: "We open the gates of knowledge to everyone in our community irrespective of income level. We provide training that helps ease our student's transition to the world of work or to advanced forms of education. We strive to foster a community of learning and respect, where everyone can better themselves, their families and our community."

CHAPTER 7

STORY

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Stories prompt people to act via simulation—showing people *how* to act—and via inspiration—providing the energy and motivation to act.

Research shows that when people swap stories—whether they're emergency room nurses or Xerox copier repairmen—they aren't just entertaining their peers, they're providing mental training. The audience is thinking, *How would I have reacted if I'd been in that situation?* Furthermore, this ability to visualize oneself in the situation is the next best thing to actually experiencing it. In short, stories are flight simulators for the brain.

Stories also have the power to inspire, as with the tale of Jared, the college student from the Subway campaign who lost hundreds of pounds eating low-fat sandwiches. There are three types of plots that inspire: (1) The Challenge Plot, where a protagonist overcomes big obstacles to succeed. Think David and Goliath (or Jared). (2) The Connection Plot, where two dissimilar people overcome social barriers to share a special moment. Think the Mean Joe Greene Coke commercial. (3) The Creativity Plot, where an individual or team use resourcefulness and gumption to solve a problem in a novel way. Think MacGyver.

A final kind of story, the "springboard" story, allows people to see how an existing problem might change. Stephen Denning helped the World Bank understand how a knowledge-management system could help its workers at the ground level do better work.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to say that stories are like "flight simulators for the brain"?
2. Why do stories lead to action?
3. What are the three plots that inspire people to act? Give an example of each one.
4. Does a story have to be entertaining to be effective? (Answer: certainly not—see springboard stories.)
5. Why did the Jared campaign do so much better than the "7 under 6" campaign? What was missing from "7 under 6"? (Don't forget the other elements of the framework here, such as Emotional and Concrete.)
6. What story inspires you?
7. At the end of the chapter, there's a story about some presenters at a conference who were furious when the stories they told were plucked out and presented as the "takeaway." Why were they furious? Do you empathize with them? What would you say to them if you were Gary Klein's group who had captured the stories?

ACTIVITIES/EXERCISES

1. **Plot-spotting.**
   - a. Ask students to think of movies that fit the three fundamental plots of inspiring stories: Challenge, Connection, Creativity.
     - i. Challenge examples: almost any action or war or sports movie
     - ii. Connection examples: *Titanic*, *You've Got Mail*, most romantic comedies and weepies
     - iii. Creativity examples: Apollo 13, lots of horror movies (figuring out how to thwart the evil beings)

2. **Morals vs. Stories.**
   - a. Take a powerful story (e.g., Aesop's Fables, a founding story for a company, a story about a famous person) and have the class identify the moral of the story. Write the moral on the board. Ask which is more powerful, the story or the moral. If the moral encapsulates "the meaning" of the story, why isn't it enough simply to share the moral? (Hint: you are fishing for the "flight simulator" idea, as well as other sticky traits like Emotional and Unexpected and Concrete.)
   - b. Why do teachers, parents, society so often default to telling the moral of the story without the story?

3. **Story-collecting.**
   - a. Ask students to come to class with a story that someone has told them—a friend, a parent, another teacher. Is it acting as a flight simulator? If so, what actions does it help people take? Is it inspiring (if so, does it share one of the three plots described in the chapter)?

CHAPTER 8

WHAT STICKS

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Your audience will sometimes make your ideas stickier—for instance, Leo Durocher never said, "Nice guys finish last," but his actual, more complicated quote was whittled down into that stickier phrase. You shouldn't fight this effect unless the idea is evolving away from the core of your message.

It will always be easier and more effective to spot a great idea than to generate one, since the world's creativity will always dwarf yours.

Good public-speaking skills don't always translate into good stickiness skills. A speech experiment at Stanford shows that the people rated as the best speakers did no better than anyone else at making their ideas stick. Foreign students, rated poorly for their speaking skills, did just as well at making it stick.

The six elements of the SUCCES framework match up nicely with a common framework of communication: To communicate, you need people to Pay Attention (Unexpected), Understand and Remember It (Concrete), Agree/Believe (Credible), Care (Emotional), and Be Able To Act (Story).

Making an idea stick is not about being charismatic, or having lots of resources behind you, or being a creative genius. The book is full of examples of normal people in normal situations who made a difference.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Were you surprised that Sherlock Holmes never said, "Elementary, my dear Watson"? How did we come to circulate this fictitious quote?
2. What were your reactions to the Stanford public-speaking exercise? Is this a good thing or a bad thing for you personally? Does this mean that charisma is irrelevant?
3. [Note that a good review exercise would be to talk through some of the Symptoms and Solutions on pages 247–249. You can pose the symptoms and have the class respond with the solutions (preferably if they aren't staring at the book's answers).]
4. If you had to make an idea stick, would you rather be super-charismatic, super-rich, or super-trained on the principles of stickiness?
5. When would you want to be charismatic? When would you want to have a sticky idea? (Hint: You want to be charismatic when you want people to feel good about you, when you are going to be in the room when the decision is made, or when the decision will be made immediately. In other situations you may want to focus on creating a sticky idea.)
6. What do you take away from the book? What will you do differently knowing what you know now?

ACTIVITIES/EXERCISES

1. **The art of story-spotting.**
   a. Put the students in the role of a hotel manager. It's a new hotel, and you want your hotel to be known for the way it "frees" guests from the real world—you help them escape the burdens and hassles of life. The hotel should feel like an oasis of comfort. Part of your job will be helping your staff internalize this vision so they can make it happen for the guests (ultimately, they will determine whether your vision succeeds or not—you can't be everywhere).

b. What stories would you be "on the lookout" for? Make up an example of the kind of story you'd hope to spot. What plot type is it? (Hint: for this example, the story might be from any of the 3 plot types.) How does your story act as a "flight simulator"?

2. Application: Avoiding power lines.

a. Tell the students they are responsible for designing a public-service announcement to warn young kids to stay away from downed power lines. Write the SUCCES checklist on the board. Put them in groups and have them design a 30-second ad that exhibits at least 4 of the 6 elements of the framework. Give them about 20 minutes to come up with the ad concept, then take volunteers to share their ads. Make sure they can explain how the ad stacks up against the framework.

3. Using the checklist.

a. Pick three anecdotes/stories from the book and revisit them using the SUCCES framework. Put the SUCCES checklist on the board and assess the anecdotes against it, determining which of the sticky traits each one exhibits. Note that even if an example came up in the "Concrete" chapter, it's still likely to have at least a couple of other qualities.

b. This is a great way to review the lessons from the book and have students apply the concepts.