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## Chip and Dan Heath's 'Made to Stick' Uncovers What Makes Ideas Matter

Have you ever wondered why certain stories that have no basis in fact get passed around like wildfire? Whether they're rumors, urban legends, or conspiracy theories, these tales can often gain more traction than important ideas and facts. In their book "Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die," Chip and Dan Heath explore the qualities that give ideas relevance and pass-around value.

"An accurate but useless idea is still useless," they write. This point is key to understanding why people get excited about certain ideas and ignore others. The Heaths argue that the presentation of ideas can have just as much of an impact on their "stickiness" as the content of the ideas. After analyzing hundreds of examples, they note, "We began to see the same themes, the same attributes, reflected in a wide range of successful ideas."



"Made to Stick" explains those attributes using myriad examples to illustrate how stickiness works in the real world. Early in the book, the Heaths share six key principles, demonstrating how good ideas are made valuable and exciting by their simplicity, unexpectedness, concreteness, and credibility; are capable of rousing emotions; and are often presented in the form of

stories. While these principles are relatively straightforward, they are often subverted in an effort to use business jargon and other neutered forms of language.

The Heaths deploy John F. Kennedy's famous speech about putting a man on the moon as an example of a compellingly

relayed idea. "Had John F. Kennedy been a CEO, he would have said, 'Our mission is to become the international leader in the space industry through maximum team-centered innovation and strategically targeted aerospace initiatives,'" they explain. Nobody would have been excited about that.

If you've ever thought that you had a great idea but couldn't get your employees to buy into it, a lack of stickiness may be the cause. Understanding how to present your ideas in an inspiring way could unlock the key to increased productivity and growth like you've never achieved before.

The next time you present an idea to your team, a group of conference attendees, or any other audience, ask yourself if that idea will stick. If it won't, you're just wasting your time. If you need a little guidance on how to make your ideas punch a little harder, "Made to Stick" should be on your holiday book list.

# A HOLIDAY TRADITION

## The Busiest Time of the Year

When I first started Building Air Quality 29 years ago, winter was pretty quiet. Clients seldom called in the cold months. It was the hot, humid summer days that kept me busy. Now, since the work I do is so varied, I get calls year-round. This is a blessing and a curse. I'm certainly happy to have the work, but when the holidays come around, I have so much on my plate that I don't have the opportunity to make any plans.

This is the nature of running your own business, and I wouldn't have it any other way. My son-in-law is a carpenter, and he recently bought the company he's worked at for years. When I was in California for my middle daughter's wedding, we were talking about how different it is when you're in charge of the company. He told me how he works the same long hours, but throughout the day, he has a chance to gather his thoughts and figure out the best way to spend his time. This was something I could certainly relate to. The best part about running a business is getting to decide how you spend your time — though occasionally, that means you have to choose to spend your time finishing reports while you're on vacation.

I don't mind being busy through the end of December. Through my hard work, my clients are able to start the new year on the right foot. When my clients call, it's because they need me. I get to come in and solve problems, which I really enjoy. This time of year, I have a lot of clients who need me to walk their buildings, doing proactive surveys before their budget runs out at the end of the year. And of course, there are the odd tenant complaints and emergencies brought on by mold or water damage. Whatever the job, it's rare for me to have a silent night this time of year.



**"I don't mind being busy through the end of December. Through my hard work, my clients are able to start the new year on the right foot."**

After I get a call or email, I try to get out to the site as soon as possible. Sometimes, I'm able to come in the very next morning, which always seems to surprise people. If I can shuffle my schedule around, I will. I'd rather not have my clients waiting around three or four days to fix a problem that needs to be solved yesterday. Their business

is too important to me. I don't want to run the risk of them calling someone else who won't do as good of a job. I've had to clean up plenty of messes that could have been easily avoided if I dealt with the problem in the first place. Plus, any business owner knows that if you go the extra mile, and put in the extra effort, you're going to be the first one clients will call in the future.

I can't promise I'll be able to make it over the next day for every call. Sometimes, I get a call and I have to say, "Can it wait until Thursday?" But when the situation is dire, I'll try to move the schedule around and be there as soon as possible.

Happy holidays to you all! Thank you for another great, busy year. I look forward to working with each of you in 2019.



# THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG?

## Why Nurturing Employees and Customers Is the Key to Retention

Who comes first: employees or customers? When posed this classic business question, Southwest Airlines co-founder Herb Kelleher had an easy answer: employees. "If employees are treated right, they treat the outside world right," Kelleher explained. As Kelleher knows well, employee-customer relations are a cycle — one that fuels recurring business. Engaged employees deliver service that converts to sales, a fact backed up by a Gallup report. Gallup cited a 20 percent increase in sales as a result of this process.

Even as you're courting leads, you can't ignore your existing customers. Likewise, even (and especially) as you grow, you have to nurture your employees. The cost of losing either is too high. In the holiday rush, it's important to not lose sight of your priorities.

### Get them hooked on your service.

Have you ever asked a client why they return to your business? Do you think it's because they can't find your product or service anywhere else? Probably not. Think about the last time you returned to a restaurant. Was it because it's the only place in town that makes amazing Thai food? Maybe, but it's more likely that you enjoyed the welcoming host, attentive waiter, and positive experience you had there.

Starbucks is a great example. Even with thick competition, they deliver consistent service and quality products to customers, whether in Oregon or London. And they do this by providing competitive wages and benefits to their employees along with training and learning opportunities. Employees who are knowledgeable and excited about what they are offering pass their enthusiasm on to customers.

### Own up to mistakes.

Even the best businesses make mistakes. When it happens, own up to it. There's probably been a time when you put in your order at a restaurant, only to receive the wrong thing. How did the business handle it? Did they admit their mistake and offer you a new meal? How a business treats customers when things don't go smoothly is a good indication of how they'll handle adversity in general, and that reaction starts with employees. Set the precedent for employees that a mistake is their opportunity to go above and beyond.

A transparent environment will make employees feel more comfortable, which will make customers excited, rather than apprehensive, to engage with your business again.



# Don't Misdiagnose an IAQ Complaint

## Why You Need a HOBO Data Logger

Some years ago, we were called out to a courthouse in Corpus Christi, Texas, where mold was growing on the ceiling of a three-story atrium. They'd cleaned the mold, but it kept growing back. We suspected the air at the top of the atrium was reaching dew point, causing condensation that enabled mold to grow, but we needed to figure out why it was reaching that point. To get the data we needed, we got on a lift and attached an Onset HOBO MX1101 data logger to the atrium. This portable Bluetooth enabled device is used to accurately measure changes in temperature and humidity in certain parts of a building over a period of time.

We left the HOBO up for a little over a year to collect data. When we came back, it took just a press of a button to download all the data onto an iPhone. Then we could see all the patterns of temperature and humidity fluctuation. With this, we determined the culprit was a maintenance engineer who was under the impression that bringing in large amount of outdoor air would help the indoor air quality of the building. The problem is that down near the Gulf of Mexico, the outdoor air is full of moisture. The building's air conditioning system was not equipped to take out that amount of moisture. It got too humid inside, and mold was free to grow.

HOBO data loggers aren't just for IAQ experts to determine when well-meaning maintenance engineers are letting in too much outdoor air. They also come in handy for determining if you really have an IAQ problem on your hands. You'd be surprised how many thermal comfort complaints are misdiagnosed as IAQ troubles because people don't have the vocabulary to express their issue. They feel hot or cold, clammy or dry, and assume the discomfort must have something to do with air quality. If you had a HOBO in your tool kit, you'd be able to confirm that nothing was wrong with your air conditioner, or that the complaint is actually due to the tenant sitting next to a window with the sun shining through.

Anyone can get one of these devices. If you're a building owner or a property manager, you should definitely have a HOBO on hand. This portable, relatively inexpensive device can help you determine if there's really a problem with your air conditioning system before you pay an expert to come out. That said, if you don't have a HOBO and aren't in a position to get one and you think you might have a humidity problem in your building, give us a call at 281-448-1100. We have several HOBOS available to come out and investigate your building.



# Business Logistics of the North Pole

## One Company You Wouldn't Want to Run

If you think running your business is tough, try thinking about how Santa operates the North Pole. From least to most complex, here are the four hardest aspects of running an operation that delivers gifts to 7 billion people.



the number of elf births. On top of that, Santa has to consider the worker-to-production ratio when factoring in new employees. The number of new hires and how much they can produce has to outpace the population increase of the world. For example, if Santa has 100,000 workers, each employee needs to create at least 70,000 toys so they can supply the world's human population. If elf births go down, then production has to increase to make up for the difference.

### 1. Real Estate

Finding an office space that can facilitate your business operations is a challenging undertaking for anyone. You need to provide an optimal workspace that offers room to grow. If you run a production operation like Santa's Workshop, you also need adequate space to house your products. Just think how big the warehouses up North need to be. If you thought Nike or Google had big campuses, Santa's must cover the entire Arctic.

### 2. Internal Communication

A frequent business killer for most of us is probably a smooth-sailing process for Santa — surely the North Pole doesn't have any challenges creating a positive work culture. Elves are often depicted as cheerful and consistent team players. They whistle while they work and enjoy Christmas candy, and every toy is ready by Christmas Eve.

### 3. Labor

Finding skilled labor in America is a challenge, but in the North Pole, it has to be even more challenging. Since Santa can't hire new workers or offer moving incentives, the amount of available labor is directly proportional to

### 4. Materials

Since Santa can't gather raw materials from the barren wasteland of the North Pole, he is required to import or artificially grow the necessary supplies and equipment to produce toys. The number of shipments needed would be a nearly impossible feat, so Santa would need a facility that could produce synthetic materials and greenhouses that could grow organic materials. These facilities alone would be impossible to keep hidden from explorers or satellites, so he would need shrinking capabilities via a laser, or perhaps he'd have to go underground, which is the more commonly accepted explanation.

We don't know how it happens each year, but somehow, Christmas goes off without a hitch. It's the greatest feat in the world of business. Move over, Jeff Bezos, because Santa is coming to town!

## Have a Laugh With Travis



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