

Notes—Contagious: Why Things Catch On by Jonah Berger

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STEPPS:

Social Currency

Triggers

Emotion

Public

Practical Value

Stories

SOCIAL CURRENCY

WE SHARE THINGS THAT MAKE US LOOK GOOD

40% of what people talk about are about personal experiences or personal relationships. Why? We are wired to find it pleasurable. Research found that disclosing info about self is intrinsically rewarding.

Sharing personal opinions activated same brain circuits that respond to rewards like money and food.

People will take a pay cut to be heard.

Why do people share?

Choices signal identity.

What do they share? Entertaining, clever, hip, and leaves behind a good impression. Word of mouth is a prime tool for making a good impression.

A good impression is a kind of social currency.

Inner Remarkability; leverage game mechanics; make people feel like insiders.

Inner Remarkability: They are worthy of remark, worthy of mention. To do that generate surprise by breaking a pattern people have to come to expect.

Leverage game mechanics: Better in relative terms. People don't care about how they are doing; they care about their performance relative to others. Build a good game by giving rewards (frequent flyer)

Giving awards—who gave gets spoken.

Make people feel like insiders: People clamor for scarce or exclusive resources. Scarcity and exclusivity make products more desirable. Scarcity is about how much of something is offered.

Exclusivity works but isn't about money or celebrity. It is also about knowledge, knowing certain information or being connected to people who do. Scarcity and exclusivity boosts word of mouth by making people feel like insiders.

People don't need to be paid to be motivated. They can be paid with Social Currency.

TRIGGERS

TOP OF MIND IS TIP OF TONGUE

Pioneer Mars expedition, Mars Bars sales rocketed.

Tray--healthy foods.

We just want to say something to prove that we are not terrible conversationalists.

Top of Mind is Tip of Tongue!

Wassup ad and Beer Sales.

Even negative reviews increased sales of books because it reminds people that the product or idea exists.

Kit Kat ad for "taking a break, break, break" Kit Kat and coffee, paired. \$300 Million to \$500 million gain.

Coffee is a good thing to link to a brand because it is a frequent stimulus in the environment.

Boston Market/Dinner; dinner time sales grew.

Can do the same to use a "poison parasite" to competition.

Triggers have short time spans and need action to be taken immediately. Watch out for time lapse.

Also consider context: Cheesesteaks/Philadelphia; Halloween/Orange; Cheerios/Breakfast.

Social Currency gets people talking; Triggers keep them talking. Top of mind is tip of tongue.

EMOTION

WHEN WE CARE, WE SHARE!

We share useful information

We share interesting information

We share awe-inspiring information

We share pleasant and positive information that is useful, interesting and awe-inspiring.

People prefer to share good news.

People prefer to share positive information.

But we also share news that arouse anger and anxiety.

Emotions can be positive or negative but an additional dimension of activation or arousal. Arousal is a state of activation and readiness for action. Psychological arousal motivates a flight-or-flight response that helps organisms catch food or flee from predators. Arousal kindles the fire.

Anger and anxiety are high-arousal.

When inspired by awe we can't help wanting to tell people what happened.

Sadness and contentment deactivates people. Makes people relax.

Matrix

		HIGH AROUSAL		LOW AROUSAL
Positive	I	Awe	I	Contentment
	I	Excitement	I	
	I	Amusement	I	

Negative	I	Anger	I	Sadness
	I	Anxiety	I	

Physiological arousal kindle the fire, activate people and drive them to take action.

Arousal is the reason why funny things get shared.

People are less likely to share sadness or contentment because they decrease arousal.

United Breaks Guitars—video! Stock price dropped \$180 Million, or 10 percent, after the video.

Marketing messages tend to focus on information; we need to focus on people, the underlying emotions that motivate people to action.

Use "Three Whys" to find the emotional core of an idea.

Write down why you think people are doing something.

Then ask, "Why is this important?" three times!

We need to figure out how to make them care!

Select high arousal emotions that drive people to action.

Show them how they can make difference.

On the negative side, make people mad, not sad.

More anger or more humor led to more sharing.

Disgust is a highly arousing emotion.

Exercise creates physiological arousal and makes people share more.

Be careful when you step off a treadmill; likewise when you barely avoid a car accident, or experience a turbulent plane ride.

Work groups may benefit from taking walks together because it will encourage people to share ideas and opinions.

Any sort of arousal, whether emotional or physical sources, and even arousal due to the situation itself (rather than the content) can boost transmission.

Activating emotion is the key to transmission.

We need to make people excited or make them laugh.

PUBLIC VISIBILITY

IF SOMETHING IS BUILT TO SHOW, IT WILL GROW

Public Visibility is key.

The psychology of imitation—people often imitate those around. People are more likely to laugh when they hear others laughing.

People imitate because others' choices provide information. To resolve uncertainty, we often look to what other people are doing and follow that. We assume of other people are doing something, it must be a good idea. They know something we don't.

Psychologists call this idea "Social Proof".

Kidney transplants and Social Proof: 97.1 percent of kidney offers are refused because recipients low on the list believe that if the kidney being offered to them is not good enough for people on top of the list, it isn't good enough for them.

People assume that the longer the line at a vendor, the better the food.

Herd mentality even affects careers—MBA students have a broad range of ambition at the beginning of the program; during the second year their ambition becomes homogenous and concentrated. Two-thirds want to get into investment banking or consulting, with a sprinkling of other careers. This herding is driven by social influence.

Thoughts are private, behavior is public.

Social behavior is stronger when behavior was observable.

Public visibility boosts word of mouth.

The more public a product or service is, the more it triggers people to action.

Hotmail, Polo logo, Apple's white earphones, are visual tools.

Sounds, shapes, also matter. Intel inside, CNN. Louboutin and his red-lacquered shoes (Chanel red nail-polish).

They all create behavioral residue. Examples: LiveStrong band. "I Voted" sticker.

Lululemon: Rather than make paper bags that are relatively durable, it makes shopping bags that are hard to throw away.

Behavioral residue helps provide social proof for brand.

Observability and Social Proof can have a backlash for stopping bad behavior. Say no to drugs, music piracy ads actually increased bad behavior by making it more observable with Social Proof. Instead highlight what the good behavior ought to be and highlight it.

PRACTICAL VALUE

NEWS YOU CAN USE

EASIEST ONE TO APPLY!

People like to pass along practical useful information, news others can use.

Brilliant William F. Buckley quote: which single book would he take to a desert island; "A Book on Shipbuilding".

Useful things are important.
People don't just value practical information, they share it.
Offering practical value helps make things contagious.

Sharing practical valuable content is like a modern-day barn-raising. A community project.
Today, we have very few opportunities to help others are fewer and farther between. Passing along useful information strengthens social bonds.

If Social Currency is about the sender, Practical Value is about the receiver. Helping people save time and money or helping them have good experiences. Sharing is caring.

Behavioral Economics:

Absolute size of discount doesn't count.

Prospect Theory: People don't evaluate things in absolute terms. They evaluate them relative to a comparison standard, or "reference point".

Old people are stingier than the rest of us because they have seen lower "reference points".

Using the word Sale for a product increased sales even though the price itself stayed the same.

Saving \$10 for a radio or a TV people behave differently. 87% went to the second store for the \$10 discount on the radio; 17% went to second store for the \$10 discount on \$650 TV.

This is "Diminishing Sensitivity".

Deals appear more appealing when they highlight incredible value. Promotional value that exceed what people expect.

Restricting availability through scarcity and exclusivity makes things seem more valuable.

Research shows that "quantity purchase limits", such as "one PC per person", increase sales by more than 50%.

Rule of 100. If the product is less than \$100 percentage discounts will seem larger. If the product is more than \$100 absolute \$ discounts will seem larger.

Useful information is another form of practical value.

Helping people do things they want to do, or encouraging them to do things they should do. Faster, easier, better.

First key is the content: Short, crisp lists around a key topic.

Second key is a focused, narrow audience. Content relevant to a narrow audience may actually be more viral.

False information can spread just as quickly as the truth.

Steps: Highlight incredible value; use rule of 100; package knowledge and expertise so people can pass it along; make it clear why our product is useful. News you can use.

STORIES

INFORMATION TRAVELS UNDER THE GUISE OF IDLE CHATTER

Send your message in a story, so people can't separate the two.
People don't think in terms of information. They think in terms of "narratives."
While people focus on the story, information comes along for the ride.
Information travels under the guise of what seems like idle chatter.

STEPPS

Social Currency

Does talking about your product or idea make people look good?
Can you find inner remarkability? Leverage game mechanics? Make people feel like insiders?

Triggers

Consider the context. What cues make people think about your product or idea? How can you grow the habitat and make it come to mind more often?

Emotion

Focus on feelings. Does talking about your product or idea generate emotion? How can you kindle the fire?

Public Visibility

Does your product or idea advertise itself?
Can people see when others are using it?
If not, how can you make the private public?
Can you create behavioral residue that sticks around even after people use it?

Practical Value

Does talking about your product or idea help others? How can you highlight incredible value, packaging your knowledge and expertise into useful information others will want to disseminate?

Stories

What is your Trojan Horse?
Is your product or idea embedded in a broader narrative that people want to share?
Is the story not only viral, but also valuable?

END