MARKETING | RESEARCH

Blink and *The Tipping Point*

written by Malcolm **Gladwell**

1200 words | 6 pages

Gladwell's *Blink* is way up high on Amazon.com's sales ranking, and honestly I'm not sure why. Granted, it has a DaVinci Codeish appeal. It's a string of great stories enabled by many (the majority?) of its' reader's sincere desires to find solid, even scientific connections, and whys, and what makes this so foundations for their high regard for snap judgments, rapid cognition, hunches, gut feel and intuition. Alas, it's more novel than novel.

I am, well, a glad Gladwell fan. I fell in love with his book *The Tipping Point,* and in like with him when I interviewed him for a piece in Networking Times. So, with the law of consistency at play— the tendency to believe or behave as we have before (saves having to think about things) — I jumped on *Blink* as soon as it was released. And I was entertained (Gladwell is a wonderful story-teller and stories are where it's at). But I got bored and didn't finish the book, because I wasn't learning anything new. Least, not what I really wanted to know. I expected/ wanted answers to questions (ala Jimmy Buffet, "that bothered him so"), such as: What is intuition really? How can I tell when my 'judgment' is speaking or it's my rational/analytical mind (or worse, ego or false self)... or something's being lost in translation? What will it take to access more of my 'inner guidance' more of the time? How do we think without thinking? Things like that are what intrigued me most. And... not from this book.

One Amazon.com reviewer said it as well or better than me:

> ***I'd categorize this a 'Pulpy Pop Business Book'. Not as revealing or useful in a business environment as* The Tipping Point*. All in all, it's a nice 'Chinese dinner'.***

Great tasting, enjoyable, but I felt hungry an hour after the last bite.

Ahhh, but *The Tipping Point,* now there is a book! And, a MUST read for all networkers, marketers and (follows nicely) network marketers.

As I understand the back-story, young Mr. Gladwell hung around the CDC—Center for Disease Control— while a science writer for The Washington Post. T'was there and then the Brit-born Canadian became enamored with epidemics; what it took for a growing group of kids sneezing in the suburbs to shut down all the schools in the entire city with a full-blown plague of colds and flu. The term "tipping point" describes the fulcrum found to cause an epidemic to reach critical mass. Gladwell must have reasoned; as in medicine, so in social and commercial epidemics. His was a quest for the reasons for success.

The best way to understand the dramatic transformation of unknown books into bestsellers, or the rise of teenage smoking, or the phenomena of word of mouth or any number of the other mysterious changes that mark everyday life, is to think of them as epidemics. Ideas and products and messages and behaviors spread just like viruses do.

So, if you are in a word-of-mouth or word-of-mouse based business, the why and how of creating and sustaining "epidemics" would be a good thing to know. Certainly every network marketer must dream of having tens-of-thousands of potential customers and possible business partners catch their product or

opportunity disease. And in *The Tipping Point,* Gladwell shows and tells this exactly.

Through a seemingly un-ending (right up until the end) string of stories (all as said, clearly and richly told) Gladwell discovers (and we with him) there are three kinds of people who do the tipping:

> ***Salesmen— those gifted in the art and science of persuasion and convincing others.***
>
> ***Mavens— the experts we go to when we've a need to know, and...***
>
> ***Connectors— those natural networkers with the rotund Rolodexes always at the ready.***

At the source of the spread of every social and commercial epidemic, you will find one or more of these— sometimes in the same individual, sometimes all three, such as the case in the book of one Paul Revere from colonial Boston.

Revere's extensive, first-hand knowledge ("One if by land, two if by sea) of British troop movements Maven, combined with knowing exactly who to tell (like John Quincy Adams and John Hancock) and lots of them Connector, along with the benefit of a powerful, persuasive story ("The British are coming! The British are coming!") Salesman, pretty much set off a war of epic and epidemic proportions in one night!

Remember William Dawes, and Dr. Samuel Prescott? Right. Neither was a Maven, Salesman or Connector of much merit.

Gladwell also found what I believe to be the most seminal point of all for a network marketer:

The single most important thing that connects people together is SHARED ACTIVITY.

Baseball fans hang out with other baseball fans (and Yankees and Red Socks fans do not appeal to each other, except in the heat and hate of their teams rivalry, which is a very strong negative connection, but a connection none-the-less). Soccer moms are with soccer moms, gardeners with gardeners, entrepreneurs with entrepreneurs, and so on.

Shared activity, Gladwell says in *The Tipping Point,* is the glue that connects people-to-people. For people in the business of connecting people together, that's important to know and know how. But I say Malcolm Gladwell missed an even more vital piece of knowing: What is the essence of shared activity? If you knew that, then you'd know what you most need to learn to successfully connect people with your products and opportunity— yes?

The essential ingredient of shared activity, the all important why people engage in this or that endeavor is values. A person's values are in the head and at the heart of his or her choice to do this or that. Baseball fans, soccer moms, gardeners, entrepreneurs share common values. Their pursuits allow them to honor those values, to experience and express those values.

Learn what a person's values are, what turns him or her on and off, what's most important in his or her life, and you know if you have a customer or business partner or you don't. You will know if the two of you can truly connect in the shared activity of network

marketing— or not. You know if there is a fit— or not.

Okay. Perhaps now I like Gladwell and love *The Tipping Point,* because he and me (and we) agree. Not only that. Back when I read the book and then interviewed Malcolm, I intuitively knew (as in *Blink*) the importance of values in relationship, friendship, partnership and leadership. The book helped me understand why. And I've found for myself, once I understand why, I am very good to go— on any thing.

I highly recommend *The Tipping Point* as a MUST read, especially for network marketing leaders, and lowly recommend *Blink*. Which is to say, I neither do nor do not recommend buying the book. That you will have to judge for yourself.

Quick! Snap judgment. *Blink.* What will you do...?
— JMF

The Tipping Point
Written by Malcolm Gladwell
Publisher: Little, Brown (February, 2000)
Hardcover: 288 pages
ISBN: 0316316962
Retail: $24.95
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Publisher: Little, Brown (January 11, 2005)
Hardcover: 288 pages
ISBN: 0316172324
Retail: $25.95
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