**The Tipping Point Review**

In The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell we learn of a theory he has made called the tipping point. This is the theory he uses to explain the rapid expansion of something once it reaches a certain “tipping point”. This book uses cases from life to put to test the theories he is trying to explain. This mixed with the theoretical applications he comes up with makes for a good explanation of his ideas.

This book is based on the idea of “the tipping point”. This is the idea that something can become like an epidemic and spread throughout a community very quickly once it reaches a certain point. An example that Gladwell used in the book that I thought provided a good example about what an exponential expansion can do was about folding paper over. If you fold a piece of paper in half it doubles the thickness right? So, Gladwell questioned how thick would your piece of paper be if you could fold it in half 50 times. Many would guess as thick as a phone book or if you were feeling courageous, maybe as tall as a house. In reality this amount of folds would make something thick enough to reach the sun from earth. This is difficult for humans to comprehend, Gladwell tells us. He goes on to say that we have to forget about proportionality when it comes to the tipping point. He said that sometimes all it took was a little push for something to go over the tipping point and make huge strides.

So we know that anything can take hold and grow rapidly once it hits this tipping point but, what are the facilitators for making this happen. Gladwell broke up the factors that make an epidemic. Gladwell told that you would need a certain type of person for an epidemic as well as a set of circumstances. I’ll go over the people involved first. Gladwell said that there are people with a special set of skills who really help reach the tipping point. There aren’t many of these people so Gladwell used the phrase “the law of few”. Gladwell broke up the type of people involved in starting an epidemic into three groups: Connectors, Mavens, and Salesmen. Connectors, as Gladwell notes, know a lot of people. They are somebody who has many connections to people that could set of an epidemic. Gladwell used the example of the midnight ride by Paul Revere and William Dawes here. Revere rallied up many people and saw great success because he was a connector. Dawes hardly rallied up any support and it was because as Gladwell put it “Dawes was an ordinary man.” The next type of person involved in reaching the tipping point was a maven. This is someone who is very well versed in some subject, an expert. But Gladwell, said that they were more than experts because they also needed the quality of wanting to help. These mavens know their subject and they want to teach you about it for your good. Gladwell said these were the people who keep the market fair. Finally, the last type of person involved was referred to as a salesman. This is someone that can do the persuasion on people that convinces them to buy into something. This can be a product, an idea, or an action. Regardless they are the person that facilitates that last push you needed to buy in.

People weren’t the only thing that Gladwell thought made an epidemic occur. You need a set of circumstances to hit the tipping point. These circumstances include the law of few, a stickiness factor, and the power of context. We already went over the law of few and how it is composed of some special people that facilitate an epidemic. The stickiness factor is how something has some sort of lasting ability. He used the analogy that a cold wouldn’t be much of an epidemic if it only gave you sniffles and lasted for a day or two. Finally, Gladwell said that the context of a situation was very important. He used some examples about how people react differently to crime when in a group as opposed to alone. In one there was a woman who was observed being attacked by 38 people and no one helped her. Gladwell attributed this to there being too many people watching and giving the context that “one of the other people” would help her. There was also the example of 4 black youths being shot on the subway in New York. Gladwell went on to explain about the man who did the shooting and how it may have been all of his surroundings and not the actions of the youths who incited this incident.

So, Gladwell broke down what he thought made up an epidemic pretty well. To illustrate his points he used examples of cases, people, and stories. I really enjoyed his rather frequent use of examples. There were many more than the previous few books I read and having more examples really gives more credibility to Gladwell’s ideas. His examples weren’t all the same either. They ranged from the spread of STDs to the smashing success of Sesame Street. He also told about people who covered each of the “law of few” types. Each one was an interesting character and tended to hold my attention.

I enjoyed the format of The Tipping Point as well. This book followed a logical order and seemed well put together. This book had much more polish than the last few books I’ve read. Gladwell has a way of explaining things that makes perfect sense and is easy to understand. He used a fair amount of repetition but, I don’t think that he overused it. He gave the right amount for information retention though. Gladwell didn’t dwell on anything for too long either. The pacing of the book was good as well. The use of giving information, providing examples, and some personal insight kept the book from getting stale. I like that he devoted a section at the end of the book exclusively to cases to represent his points. I really feel that of the last few books I read Gladwell fared far better in this department.

The information in the book made sense to me and wasn’t a bad idea. I like the way that Gladwell broke down the parts that make an epidemic. Many of the ideas he presented were new to me or presented in such a way that it gave me some new knowledge. However, many of the ideas seemed almost like common sense too. For instance, the exponential spread of information seems like common sense because of the ways we see sickness spread. His thought that word of mouth was one of the most trusted sources of information was another example. If you think about the way you yourself would get recommendations this comes up. Some of the information was new and not just common sense, however. For example when he was covering the state of the New York subway system and it’s crimes I thought it was interesting that he attributed the crime to the environment as opposed to the people. He said that once the graffiti was scrubbed from the cars and the people who didn’t pay for fare detained that the state of the system improved.

One of the parts I liked most about the book was the frequent and varied use of examples throughout. The anecdotes about how smoking itself wasn’t ever cool and how smoking was only cool because of these certain people doing it was interesting. The stories about Sesame Street also intrigued me. A slight variation before the show launched saved the show from being forgotten and actually made it one of the most successful shows there are. The decision was just to let the puppets and people appear together as opposed to being separated. Many times he broke down examples in ways that I may not have. The example about the spread of STDs and how the patterns varied according to season was interesting. I would never have thought that STDs essentially have travel patterns and that it might be based on if it’s cold outside.

So, The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell was a good read. I would recommend it to anyone that’d like a little more insight into why things may become popular and anyone with an interest for business. I truly thought his use of examples set him apart from the last few books I read and I believe this added so much to the credibility of his ideas. It only takes a small push and a few circumstances for a new epidemic to sweep a community. If you’re thinking about reading the book I’d give you a small push and suggest you tip over the edge to give it a read!