



Books Beyond Buzz

Hot books come and go, but these five remain essential reading for anyone who wants to understand how people think and what makes them act.

When Chip and Dan Heath's *Made to Stick* came out in 2007, I must have received twenty or thirty emails from friends insisting I read it. A few years earlier, the same thing happened with George Lakoff's *Don't Think of an Elephant*. And if I had a nickel for every time somebody recommended Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point*...

I'm not sure what title has good causes buzzing today (Gladwell's *Outliers*, possibly), but there's sure to be another stampede to the book that finally Explains It All. Which is fine, except that those mad dashes tend to bypass a handful of books that, while neither new nor hot, are well worth reading.

So if you communicate for a living and want a solid grounding in the fundamentals, tune out the buzz for a while and read (or re-read) these five essential texts:

Diffusion of Innovations, by Everett Rogers (Free Press, 5th ed. © 2003)

Even 45 years after its debut, *Diffusion* remains the definitive manual for introducing new ideas and convincing millions of people to try them - even if this wasn't the author's intention. *Diffusion* is an exhaustive analysis of hundreds of innovations from the cure for scurvy (which took nearly two centuries to gain acceptance) to mobile phones (which went from novelty to ubiquity in about two seconds). Rogers, who coined the term "early adopter," studied these innovations to learn what makes a new idea attractive, how it spreads from one person to another, and what factors accelerate that diffusion.



If changing minds or behavior is your goal, Rogers will give you five time-tested guidelines to follow. One caveat: *Diffusion* is not a breezy read. There are long sections worth skipping (chapters 2 and 3 on the

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After the hot books cool, read these

November at The Goodman Center

Strategy & storytelling on tap this month



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free-range thinking is written by Andy Goodman and edited by Lori Matsumoto. To read back issues, download free publications, and to learn more about our work, please visit www.agoodmanonline.com and www.thegoodmancenter.com.

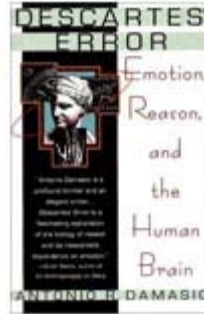
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history of diffusion research are positively sleep-inducing), but Rogers' analysis of why some new ideas catch on while others don't may provide the key to making your next new idea stick.

To preview this book, [click here](#).

Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain, by Antonio Damasio (Harper Perennial © 1995)

"I think, therefore I am," wrote René Descartes, and for centuries this statement has stood as a cornerstone of Western philosophy. Antonio Damasio, neuroscientist and author, begs to differ. A more accurate description of the human experience, Damasio asserts, would be "I think *and feel*, therefore I am," because thought and emotion are intertwined and inseparable.



This has important implications for decision-making, which Damasio maintains is not an entirely rational process. Emotions are always in the mix and often are the determining factor. And that has important implications for good causes that want to influence how others decide. If your outreach doesn't speak to your audience's emotional as well as their rational side, you're not working both sides of the brain. (And if colleagues have derided emotional messages as unduly "melodramatic" or "manipulative," *Descartes' Error* provides evidence to counter those arguments.)

To read an excerpt, [click here](#).

Tell Me a Story: Narrative & Intelligence, by Roger Schank (Northwestern University Press © 1995)



While working to build a smarter computer - Schank's primary field is artificial intelligence - the author studied key factors affecting how people learn. His conclusion: the ability to remember, store, and retrieve (i.e., tell) stories at the appropriate time may be the single most important factor in determining how smart you are.

Schank believes storytelling contributes to our understanding of ourselves, our ability to make friends, and how we fit into our communities.

Moreover, he explains how stories aid memory and act as search engines that help find facts stored deep within the brain. If you believe as I do that storytelling is a communications tool of the highest order, then consider Schank's book required reading.

To preview this book, [click here](#).



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GOOD IDEAS FOR GOOD CAUSES

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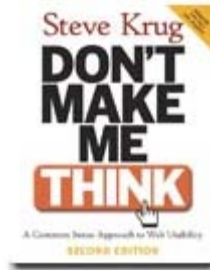
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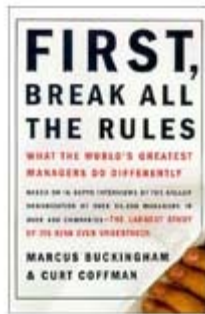
Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability, by Steve Krug (New Riders Publishing © 2000)

If your organization is launching a new web site or revamping an existing one, this is flat out the best book for ensuring that visitors stop and smell your digital roses. Having worked for AOL, Apple, and Netscape, Krug knows his way around web sites, and he leavens his advice with just the right amount of humor and sarcasm. If you don't know the five questions every home page must answer - or even if you do and you just want a fun read - *Don't Make Me Think* is for you.



[Read a sample chapter.](#)

First Break All the Rules, by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman (Simon & Schuster © 1999)



Okay, this isn't a book specifically about communicating, but it is just about the best book on management I've read in the last ten years. And when advocacy or education campaigns grow large enough to require the coordinated efforts of many, it doesn't hurt to know a few things about getting the most from your colleagues. So even if you're not a manager on any organizational chart (or the designated leader of your coalition), add this one to

your reading list. More effective teamwork can help you execute more effective campaigns.

[Preview online at Google Books.](#)

Honorable Mention

- *Story*, by Robert McKee
- *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*, by Al Ries and Jack Trout
- *Permission Marketing*, by Seth Godin
- *In Other Words*, by Tony Proscio
- *Listening Is an Act of Love*, edited by Dave Isay

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November at The Goodman Center

Strategic Communications: Cutting through the Clutter

November 6th and 13th (9-10a Pacific)

There are four potential points of connection between you and your target audience. When you know all four and design your communications around them, every minute and dollar you invest will have a better chance of paying off. Fail to connect on even one point, however, and you give your audience an opportunity to walk away. This two-hour class (spread over two weeks) will help ensure you connect with your audiences.



Course curriculum includes:

- The basics of framing
- Message creation and delivery
- Classic case studies from the public-interest sector
- An easy-to-use template for campaign design

Tuition is \$250 per student, and discounts are available to organizations registering 3 or more. To register online, [click here](#).

Storytelling: Tapping the Power of Narrative

November 16th and 23rd, December 7th and 14th (9-10a Pacific)

Our most popular online class returns in November to help you relocate your inner storyteller. In four hours (spread over five weeks to accommodate the Thanksgiving break), we focus on the structure and qualities of good stories - which you often use unconsciously - and explain how you can apply them in advocacy, fundraising, recruiting and other aspects of your work.



Tuition is \$500 per student and discounts are available to organizations registering 3 or more. To find out more and reserve your space, [click here](#).

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