

Dear Friend,

In the marketplace of ideas some stories have long, healthy lives while others quickly disappear. Why do some ideas stick? In September, Sightline hosted a communications workshop with Chip Heath, Stanford professor and co-author of the new book, *Made to Stick*. This month's Flashcard is a snapshot of the book's Six Principles of Stickiness, a tool for communicators based on extensive research into the common traits of naturally successful and durable stories, from urban legends to corporate mottos.

As always, tell us what you think.

Anna Fahey, Sightline communications strategist

Flashcard No. 4: The "Greasy Food" Strategy

Case study: Six principles of Stickiness

What message works better? 1) a medium-sized bag of buttered popcorn contains 37 grams of saturated fat, or 2) a medium-sized bag contains more artery-clogging fat than a bacon-and-eggs breakfast, a Big Mac and fries, and a steak dinner – *combined*? (Hint: The second message, from a 1990s ad campaign, sparked a popcorn boycott in movie theaters from coast to coast.)

Why did it work? The "greasy food strategy" employs all six principles of stickiness: 1) **It's simple** – an uncomplicated comparison; 2) **it's unexpected** – a surprising departure from typical nutrition facts; 3) **it's concrete** – conjuring a vivid image; 4) **it's credible** – factual without overloading numbers; 5) **it's emotional** – we're disgusted, we like popcorn but we don't identify ourselves as binge eaters; and 6) **it's a good story** – the kind we could easily recount at the dinner table or a cocktail party.



What's *your* greasy food buffet? [More about the Six Principles of Stickiness.](#)



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