



MADE TO STICK

Dairy Health & Child Health

Anchor and Twist

How to get your audience to understand—and care about—your innovation

WHEN SOMEONE'S HEART goes into cardiac arrest, Good Samaritans deliver CPR until help arrives. CPR stands for cardiopulmonary resuscitation. The “cardio” part—pumping on the chest—forces blood to circulate. The “pulmonary” part—mouth-to-mouth breathing—gets oxygen to the lungs.

CPR has been ingrained in mass culture for the past 35 years, but what if a new innovation came along that supplanted it? That's precisely what happened in March 2007 when a team of Japanese researchers published a surprising paper in the prestigious *Lancet* medical journal. It tracked 4,068 adults who'd gone into cardiac arrest with bystanders present but not in a hospital. The shocker: Victims who received only the chest-pumping part of CPR had slightly better health outcomes than those who received full CPR, including mouth-to-mouth. For most victims, then, mouth-to-mouth was pointless.

This was great news, because it meant that people could save lives without knowing CPR, which is complicated to learn. It takes hours of training to master, and even people with CPR certification often freeze when a real person collapses, afraid they'll screw up: *How many times do I pump before doing a breath?* The study suggested that all you need to do is

call 911, then push hard and fast on the person's chest until the ambulance arrives. That's it. You've saved a life without getting your lips involved.

Freeze here. The American Heart Association (AHA) had a brilliant innovation on its hands that could help a lot of people. But the information wasn't helping anyone because only the AHA knew about it. Businesspeople routinely deal with this issue, even though we may not all save lives. How do you spread a new idea—fast—and get people to pay attention?

Innovations require lots of explaining. (We just spent one-third of this column laying out the CPR case.) Explanations require lots of attention, but attention is scarce. So don't explain. Instead, anchor in what people

already know. Some people within the AHA thought it wise to anchor the new technique in CPR: They lobbied to call it “CPR lite” or “CPR for dummies.” Others rejected the CPR analogy as inaccurate—the whole point of the new technique is that there's no more “pulmonary”—and lobbied for a more precise term, such as “cardiac-only resuscitation.” After much debate, the CPR analogy, thankfully, prevailed.

Anchoring is easier than explaining from scratch. Wikipedia says an alpaca is “a domesticated species of the South American camelid.” That's the explanation. Or, you could say an alpaca is like a small llama. Which one is easier to understand? (We will no doubt get nasty letters from the Association of Alpaca Amigos—“The alpaca is nothing like the dastardly llama!” Just like the AHA will get letters from smart alecks who find it acronymsically offensive to contemplate a CPR with no P.)

Breakthrough technologies often need an anchor so customers can grasp them. Consider an innovation called Lumineyes. It allows people with brown eyes to turn them permanently green or blue. According to the product's Web site, Lumineyes uses “a laser to heat the pigment layer [of your eye]. The process either bursts the pigment cells, resulting in the release of free pigment into the iris, or simply damages them.”

Um, great. Everyone who has been

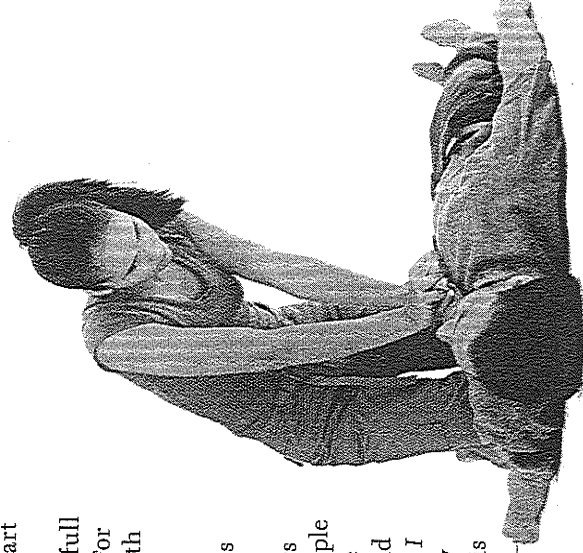
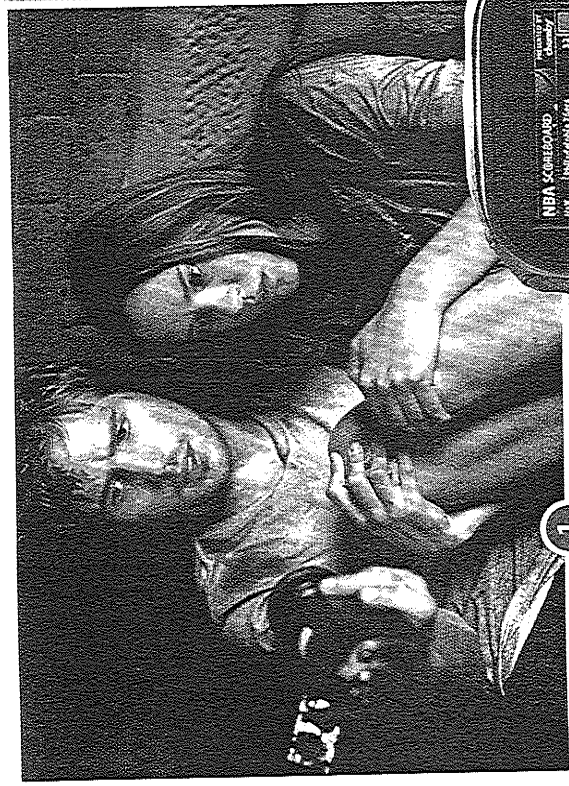


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craving some good cell-bursting or pigment-damaging action, you've found your solution. Perhaps, Lumineyes can upsell a "savaging and plucking" package.

A Stanford MBA student named Rose Roll, who was helping Lumineyes with its message as part of a class assignment, suggested that the company anchor its innovation in LASIK, the procedure that permanently improves eyesight: Lumineyes is like LASIK for eye color. In fact, Lumineyes is less invasive than LASIK—it doesn't require peeling back the cornea to allow the laser to do its work.

That was the right idea, because LASIK had already done the heavy lifting in the marketplace. You think it's hard to sell your innovation? Try persuading people to sit still while someone shoots their eyeballs with a laser. Don't refight that battle.

The only downside to anchoring is that, by hooking into existing ideas, it creates sameness. Sameness helps people understand what you're doing. But to sell something, you usually need *difference*. It doesn't work to say, "Introducing new Gleemy toothpaste—it's perfectly interchangeable with Crest!"

That's why a good innovation story couples an anchor with a twist. For instance, the AHA eventually named its new life-saving technique Hands-Only CPR. CPR serves as the anchor, and



"hands-only" is the twist. Lumineyes may anchor itself in LASIK, but its purpose is so different that it carries a powerful twist: It's like LASIK, but it makes your eyes blue.

The iPhone, too, shares this structure. It's a phone—but you realize the twist when you see someone poking and pinching the iPhone to make cool things happen. (Next up: the toaster you can tickle.) No doubt there was a faction within Apple that hated the idea of calling it the iPhone. "Guys, this is nothing like a normal phone!"

This craving to break the mold is understandable. After all, your team is responsible for creating the differences but not the similarities. From the communication standpoint, though, similarities are your friends. So anchor away. **E**



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THE CHALLENGE OF SPREADING A NEW IDEA

1. Success: Cloverfield

BREAKTHROUGH: Blockbuster event movie shot in digital video

MESSAGE: *Godzilla* meets *Blair Witch*

UPSHOT: The film has grossed about \$168 million worldwide on a \$25 million budget.

2. Jury's Out: Chumby

BREAKTHROUGH: Alarm clock that's customizable with Internet content

MESSAGE: Wake up to your Internet life

UPSHOT: Are Web widgets a cool-enough twist to justify \$180 for an alarm clock?

3. Success: Nintendo Wii

BREAKTHROUGH: Interactive games played with a motion-sensor-detection controller

MESSAGE: Social gaming for the family

UPSHOT: The Wii is a cultural phenomenon because it's rooted in video-game traditions but adds the irresistible hook of actual physical activity.

4. Jury's Out: Borders Concept Stores

BREAKTHROUGH: A retail environment that guides Luddites into the digital age

MESSAGE: Books plus a helping hand

into MP3s, digital photo albums, etc.

UPSHOT: Borders hasn't nailed why its new stores should be destination-worthy.