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FREE CHECKLIST

STICKY MESSAGE KIT

The Sticky Message Kit: Made to Stick's SUCCESs Method

Make your message one people remember and repeat, using the 6 principles from Chip and Dan Heath's Made to Stick. Checklist, builder, 15 rewrites and a 5-minute memory test.

09	59	2026-11
SECTIONS	IDEAS, TOOLS & TEMPLATES	LAST CHECKED



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Tested, not guessed.

INSIDE THIS CHECKLIST

The 6 SUCCESs principles from Made to Stick as a scored yes/no checklist, plus a builder that gets your business down to one sentence. Then 15 boring taglines rewritten, a worked example from start to finish, and a 5-minute test that shows if people actually remember you.

> **WHO IT'S FOR**
>
> Founders, freelancers and small teams whose tagline, bio or homepage sounds like every other company's, and who keep explaining what they do twice.

01 **If you only have 15 minutes**
Do these five things in order. You will end with one sentence you can test today.

02 **The SUCCESs checklist (6 yes/no questions)**
Chip and Dan Heath found that ideas people remember share six traits. They spell SUCCESs: Simple,...

03 **What each principle looks like on a real page**
The checklist tells you what's missing. This table shows where to put each principle on a homepage, a bio or ...

04 **One-sentence core message builder**
The Heaths call it finding the core: the one thing that matters most, said so plainly that people can use it to...

05 **Worked example: one freelancer, start to finish**
Illustrative example. A made-up freelance web designer in Pune runs the kit on her Instagram bio.

06 **15 boring taglines, rewritten**
These are typical jargon taglines, not taken from any named company. Copy the shape of the 'after', then fill...

07 **The 5-minute memory test (5 people)**
This is a practical test made for this kit, not an exercise from the book. It checks the only thing that matters:...

08 **Common mistakes checklist**
Tick each one you're making. Most weak messages fail on two or three of these.

09 **Copy-paste AI prompt to score your message**

HOW TO USE IT

1

Short on time? Do the 15-minute quick start first. It covers the core of the kit.

2

Otherwise: write your core sentence with the builder, then score it with the 6-point checklist (aim for 5 or 6).

3

Run the 5-minute memory test with 5 people. If fewer than 4 can repeat it, use the rewrites and the mistakes list, then test again.

01

If you only have 15 minutes

Do these five things in order. You will end with one sentence you can test today.

1 **Minute 0–3: Write what you do the way you'd tell a 12-year-old**

No words like 'solutions', 'leverage', 'innovative' or 'end-to-end'. Say who you help and what changes for them.

2 **Minute 3–6: Fill the builder**

'We are THE [one thing] for [one type of person].' If you need the word 'and', cut one half.

3 **Minute 6–9: Add one concrete detail**

A number, a place, a time or an object people can picture. 'Calls from Google' beats 'growth'. 'By Friday' beats 'fast'.

4 **Minute 9–12: Score it on the 6 checks below**

Give 1 point per yes. Under 4? Look at the rewrites table and copy the shape of the closest one.

5 **Minute 12–15: Send it to 2 people and ask them to repeat it tomorrow**

Message: 'What do I do, in your words?' The next day, ask again. If they can say it back, you have a first version.

02

The SUCCESs checklist (6 yes/no questions)

Chip and Dan Heath found that ideas people remember share six traits. They spell SUCCESs: Simple, Unexpected, Concrete, Credible, Emotional, Stories. Score 1 point for each honest yes.

5–6 = ready to test. 3–4 = fix the weakest one. 0–2 = start again from the builder.

- [ ] **Simple: Can you say the core in one sentence, with nothing else attached?**
  Simple here does not mean dumbed down. It means you found the single most important point and cut the rest, even good points.

- [ ] **Unexpected: Does it break what people expect from your type of business?**
  Surprise grabs attention. An open question (a curiosity gap) keeps it. If every competitor could say your line, it surprises no one.

- [ ] **Concrete: Can people picture it, like a scene or an object?**
  The brain holds on to things it can see, touch or hear. Abstract words slide off.

- [ ] **Credible: Can people check it, or see proof without trusting you?**
  The book's idea of a 'testable' claim: give people a way to check it for themselves, like a free trial, a live demo or a specific number they can verify.

- [ ] **Emotional: Will one real person care about this, not 'the market'?**
  People feel for one person more than for a big statistic. Talk to their self-interest and their identity.

- [ ] **Stories: Is there a short story that shows the message in action?**
  Stories act like a practice run. Hearing what someone did helps the listener know what to do.

03

What each principle looks like on a real page

The checklist tells you what's missing. This table shows where to put each principle on a homepage, a bio or a sales call.

Principle	Weak version	Strong version	Where to use it
Simple	We offer SEO, ads, social, email and design.	We get local clinics more bookings from Google.	Homepage headline, Instagram bio, the first line of a pitch
Unexpected	We are a results-driven agency.	We tell half our leads not to hire us yet.	Hook of a reel, email subject line, opening of a talk
Concrete	Faster load times.	Your page loads before you finish blinking. [only if measured]	Benefit bullets, product page, ad copy
Credible	Trusted by many happy clients.	Check our last 10 client sites in Search Console screenshots below. [real only]	Near the main button, case study page

Principle	Weak version	Strong version	Where to use it
Emotional	Optimise your conversion funnel.	Stop refreshing your bank app on the 28th of every month.	Subline under the headline, problem section
Stories	We have years of experience.	A bakery owner came to us with 3 orders a week. Here's what we changed first. [real client only]	About page, case study, sales call

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04

One-sentence core message builder

The Heaths call it finding the core: the one thing that matters most, said so plainly that people can use it to make decisions. Fill one of these, then cut words until it hurts.

Builder 1: the THE sentence

We are THE [one thing] for [one type of person].

> If you need 'and' in the sentence, you have two messages. Pick one.

Builder 2: the decision test

If a team member asks 'Should we do [new idea]?', the answer is yes only if it helps us be THE [one thing] for [one type of person].

> A core message is only real if it helps someone say no to a good idea.

Builder 3: the friend sentence

You know how [type of person] struggles with [problem]? I [what you do], so they [concrete result].

> Use this for networking and DMs. It's the spoken version of the THE sentence.

Example: Southwest Airlines (from the book)

"We are THE low-fare airline."

> The Heaths tell how Southwest's boss used this line to turn down a nice idea (a chicken salad on a Las Vegas flight). If it doesn't keep fares low, it doesn't happen. One sentence made every decision easier.

SEO example (illustrative, not a real company)

We are THE SEO agency for dental clinics.

> Decision test: a bakery wants to hire them. Answer: no, or send them to someone else.

05

Worked example: one freelancer, start to finish

Illustrative example. A made-up freelance web designer in Pune runs the kit on her Instagram bio.

Step	Her version	Score / note
Start	Creative web designer | UI/UX | Branding | Helping businesses grow online	1/6. Only 'Simple' is close. Nobody can picture 'grow online'.
Builder	THE website designer for home bakers.	Simple: yes. She cut UI/UX and branding.
Add concrete	I build home bakers a site that takes cake orders on WhatsApp.	Concrete: yes. You can picture the order arriving.
Add unexpected	No 'contact us' form. Orders land on WhatsApp.	Unexpected: yes. Breaks the normal website idea.
Add credible	See 3 live bakery sites below. [real links only]	Credible: yes. People can check them.
Add emotional + story	Pinned reel: a baker who stopped missing orders during Diwali week. [real client, with permission]	6/6 once the proof is real.
Memory test	4 of 5 people said 'She makes websites for bakers that take orders on WhatsApp.'	Pass. Illustrative result.

06

15 boring taglines, rewritten

These are typical jargon taglines, not taken from any named company. Copy the shape of the 'after', then fill the [brackets] only with true facts.

Before (boring)	After (sticky)	Principle added
We deliver innovative end-to-end solutions.	We build your online store and run it, so you only pack orders.	Concrete
Your trusted partner for growth.	We help bakeries sell out by Friday.	Simple + Concrete
Empowering businesses through technology.	Your invoices, sent and chased automatically.	Concrete
Best-in-class customer experience.	A real person answers in under [X] minutes. [only if true]	Credible
Leveraging synergies to drive results.	We find the 3 pages losing you money and fix them first.	Unexpected + Concrete
Quality you can trust.	Every chair is tested with [weight] before it ships. [real number]	Credible
Solutions for a digital world.	Your restaurant, on Google Maps, with photos, this week.	Concrete
Unlocking your full potential.	Run your first 5K in 8 weeks, even if you hate running.	Emotional + Concrete
Next-generation cloud platform.	Your files, on any device, even when your laptop dies.	Emotional
Holistic wellness for the modern you.	15-minute workouts you can do in your living room.	Concrete
Results-driven digital marketing.	More calls from Google for plumbers in [city].	Simple
We put customers first.	Not happy in 30 days? Full refund, no questions. [only if true]	Credible
Seamless integration with your workflow.	Works inside Gmail. Nothing new to learn.	Concrete
Passionate about excellence.	Our [product] is made by [number] people in one workshop in [town].	Stories + Credible

Before (boring)	After (sticky)	Principle added
Transforming the future of finance.	See where your money went last month, in one screen.	Concrete + Emotional

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07

The 5-minute memory test (5 people)

This is a practical test made for this kit, not an exercise from the book. It checks the only thing that matters: can people repeat your message without you in the room?

1 **1. Pick 5 people who don't know your business**

Friends of friends are fine. Not your team, not your partner. They already know too much.

2 **2. Show your homepage, bio or pitch for 30 seconds**

Don't explain anything. Just show it.

3 **3. Talk about something else for 2 minutes**

Cricket, weather, food. This clears what's sitting in short-term memory.

4 **4. Ask: 'What do we do, and for who?'**

Write down their exact words. Don't nod, don't correct.

5 **5. Score it**

Count how many said your core back in their own words. 4–5 = it sticks. 3 = fix one principle. 0–2 = go back to the builder.

6 **6. Steal their words**

If 2 or more people used the same phrase, try that phrase as your headline. Their words are often clearer than yours.

08

Common mistakes checklist

Tick each one you're making. Most weak messages fail on two or three of these.

- [ ] **You listed every service instead of picking one core.**
  The book's warning, in short: say three things and people remember none.

- [ ] **You wrote for people who already know your field.**
  The Heaths call this the curse of knowledge. Once you know something, you can't easily imagine not knowing it, so you skip the basics others need.

- [ ] **You used surprise as a gimmick, with no link to the core.**
  A shocking hook that has nothing to do with what you sell gets attention and then loses it.

- [ ] **Your proof is a big claim ('best', 'No. 1', 'trusted by thousands').**
  Big claims raise doubt. Small, checkable details build belief.

- [ ] **You quoted a market statistic to make people care.**
  One person's story moves people more than a large number.

- [ ] **You invented a story or a result.**
  Made-up proof breaks trust when found out, and fake reviews and testimonials are banned in the US under the FTC's 2024 rule. Use real stories or label examples as illustrative.

- [ ] **You never tested it on strangers.**
  You will always think your message is clear. Only other people can tell you.

- [ ] **You changed the message every month.**
  Sticky messages get repeated for years. Changing it before people learn it resets your progress.

09

Copy-paste AI prompt to score your message

Paste into ChatGPT, Claude or Gemini

You are a strict editor who uses the SUCCESs checklist from Made to Stick by Chip and Dan Heath (Simple, Unexpected, Concrete, Credible, Emotional, Stories).

My business: [one line on what you sell and to whom]
My current message: "[paste tagline, bio or headline]"

1. Score my message 0 or 1 on each of the 6 principles and explain each score in one line.
2. List every word a 12-year-old wouldn't understand.
3. Write 5 new versions under 12 words each. Each must name one type of customer and one concrete result.
4. Do NOT invent numbers, clients, awards or results. Where proof is needed, write [real proof here].

> Treat the AI's rewrites as drafts. Pick one, then run the memory test on real people. The AI can't tell you what humans remember.

Sources

Every claim in this Checklist traces back to one of these. Checked 2026-11.

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