

What do Starbucks' customer service training, Alcoa's factory safety, and Pepsodent's marketing strategy have in common? In his new bestselling book New York Times reporter Charles Duhigg examines these and other entertaining case studies of what he calls *The Power of Habit*. Duhigg leads readers through a clear and careful analysis of academic studies, interviews, and even some anecdotes. He makes a strong case that habits are a part of our everyday life, and while we may believe that we are always making conscious decisions, most of what we do is truly a result of habit. Habits are also our brain's way of being more efficient; rather than consciously thinking all the time, the brain attempts to save effort through these habitual behaviors. Duhigg refers to this phenomenon as "chunking," a process where "the brain converts a sequence of actions into an automatic routine."<sup>1</sup> If the brain did not have routines to depend on, it would become too overwhelmed to continue processing information. Therefore changing someone's habits is nearly synonymous with changing their brain.

The "habit loop," according to M.I.T. researchers, is a "simple neurological loop at the core of every habit." Each habit has a cue, which is followed by a routine, and ends with some sort of reward. The cue is what triggers the brain into completing a routine, and the reward acts as a reinforcement of the habit. If there is a beneficial reward, then the brain will store the habit loop for future use. Duhigg applies this strategy to each of the scenarios he discusses within his book. It is important to note that, "when a habit emerges, the brain stops fully participating in decision making." Because many habits are good for us, this only becomes a problem when destructive habits prevail or when business manipulates customers into creating new habits.

For example, in the early 1900s, a successful advertiser, Claude Hopkins was asked to market a new product called Pepsodent. Hopkins took on this daunting task, even though only small number of individuals brushed their teeth at this time. Through his advertising efforts, Hopkins helped create the now-automatic tooth