

# Chris Anderson. How one idea can make the world look different

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

ALL WRITERS ARE IN SEARCH OF the Big Idea. A Big Idea has to matter. But you can have only one of them. Your Big Idea can't be that there are, say, 89 Rules of Power.  $E=mc^2$  was, technically speaking, a Big Idea. But not really, because the best Big Ideas are also transparent. Truly Big Ideas are the rarest of phenomena, and when I first came upon Chris Anderson's *The Long Tail* last year, I knew this was one.

Born in 1961, Anderson became a physicist and conducted research at Los Alamos National Laboratories in New Mexico. As editor in chief of *Wired*, he described the idea of the Long Tail in a 2004 article; the book came out in 2006.

Here is what the idea says: Many of us see the same movies and read the same

books because the bookstore can store only so many books and the movie theater can play only so many movies. There isn't enough space to give us exactly what we want. So we all agree on something we kind of want. But what happens when the digital age comes along, allowing the bookstore to store all the books in the world? Now, it doesn't sell 1,000 copies of one book that we all kind of want; it sells one copy of 1,000 books each of us really wants.

Five sentences to explain something that, if you think about Amazon and Netflix and iTunes, will make you see the world a different way. That's a Truly Big Idea.

*Gladwell is the author of The Tipping Point and Blink*



# Nora Volkow. Studying the brain to find the fix for addiction

BY TOM SIZEMORE

If you were to give me a drug right now like heroin, crystal meth or speed, I wouldn't have any idea where I would wind up. In four hours I would have just as good a chance of being in a crack hotel in Denver as I would of being here. That's what addiction is. It always starts out as fun—until it becomes something else.

Addicts talk a lot about dope sickness, but what they mean when they say that is what it feels like to be without dope. It's the sensation of withdrawal that starts in the night hours of the day you run out of drugs. By the next morning, you're in bed sweating; you can't even move your feet.

There's another kind of dope sickness, however: the disease that is addiction itself. Even now, many people think of drug addiction as a failure of will, of self-control, of character. Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse, put an

end to that idea when she showed for the first time that drugs change the brain and that these changes are an important part of what makes addictions so difficult to break.

On the basis of this work, Volkow, 51, is convinced that better treatments for addiction will come from looking beyond the reward circuit in the brain. She is learning how patterns of addictive behavior are connected to such basic functions as eating, memory, the ability to feel peaceful and satisfied.

My system is in remission now. Everyone has to reach a bottom, and I reached it. Perhaps in the future, the work of Volkow and others will lead to even better routes to getting well. And it might even help prevent potential addicts from getting sick in the first place.

*Actor Sizemore recorded his addiction in Shooting Sizemore*



FROM TOP: GABRIELA HASBUN; BRIAN FINKE—LEVINE & LEAVITT FOR TIME