



## Flashbulb Memory: Leave Your Consumers with Deeper Connections



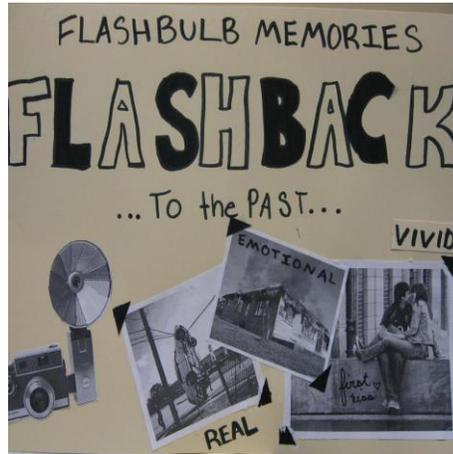
<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/mind-guest-blog/the-memory->

Flashbulb memory is a type of memory we experience with strong emotions. It is a highly detailed, extraordinarily vivid, “snapshot” of the moment and circumstances that contain emotionally arousing components.<sup>1</sup> It is different from everyday memories, where the emotions are not as intense and accuracy of the memories decline. We firmly believe that what we remember is what we experienced. Yet we remember the vivid snapshots no better than our everyday events because in both cases the memories decline over time.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, self-claimed research shows that one’s ratings of vividness and belief in the accuracy of memory decline *only* for everyday memories. Why is there a difference between *actual* decline in memories (both flashbulb and everyday memories) and our *perceived* decline in memories (everyday memories only)?

Imagine you just heard exciting news that you won a \$500,000 lottery, while you were having dinner at home, watching TV. Your good friend, David, called you several minutes later to talk about plans for the following day. You were so thrilled about winning the lottery that you share the good news with David immediately. A week later, when asked about the moment you knew about the \$500,000 prize, you may say “It feels like just yesterday that I won the lottery.” You may recount the story as you having called your friend David, vs David calling you, to tell him the good news. The memory will be very vivid in your mind and you will be very confident that your recollection of the memory is accurate, even though it is not. This is a flashbulb memory. Emotional attachment drives the difference between our perceived and actual decline in memory for flashbulb memories vs everyday memories.



Emotional connection leads to greater recall in flashbulb memories. And emotional connections are precisely what strong and influential brands strive to create with their consumers, everyday. Armed with knowledge of the power of flashbulb



<http://mercercognitivepsychology.pbworks.com/w/page/61206608/Flashbulb%20Memories>

memories, brands and advertising agencies can help create such memories with consumers, increasing the likelihood that a deep impression of the product is left (even after the everyday memories fade). Manufacturing flashbulb memories is difficult as they are created only under strong emotion-inducing situations, such as the special occasion lottery example. However, it is possible to trigger deeper, stronger, emotions with the intent of creating a *lasting* memory.

Here are some examples of neutral communications vs ones that evoke stronger emotions to create a lasting memory with consumers.

- A salesperson standing in the studio presenting a newly designed memory foam mattress. [Neutral]
- A dermatologist is talking about a facial skin-care lotion for sun spots that she recommends to a patient, discussing the supporting research evidence. [Neutral]
- A close-up of a brand of kid's paint to show its vibrant color with voiceover explaining the safe organic compounds in the paint. [Neutral]
- A salesperson is telling a family in the store about the advantages of the memory foam mattress. The kids are rolling on the mattress and playing with each other, laughter is in the air. [Emotion-evoking]
  - The connection of family can create an emotional tie vs. a voice-over that does not show the connection and bonds with those we love dearly.
- A dermatologist is talking to a patient about a facial skin-care lotion she recommends and shows her a picture of herself from two-weeks before with sun spots. She then shows her a picture from the night before at a friend's wedding, with glowing even skin, dancing with confidence. [Emotion-evoking]



- The confidence demonstrated in the picture triggers desire for self-assuredness in the patient, which will not be evoked via rational research evidence.
- A close-up of a brand of kid's paint with three siblings painting with voice-over promoting the product's safe organic compounds. [Emotion-evoking]
  - The scene triggers the positive memories of child play and creates a connection to enjoyable childhood moments, which will not be communicated via voiceover of the safety benefits alone.

Flashbulb memory provides a revised approach to the traditional emotional strategies utilized in today's communication plans. Are you ready to make your brand more memorable? Create a plan to start leveraging flashbulb-like memories in your advertising, today.

*Want to forge deeper connections with your consumers? Contact us at [info@abilitytoengage.com](mailto:info@abilitytoengage.com) or follow us on Twitter [@AbilityToEngage](https://twitter.com/AbilityToEngage)*

#### **References:**

1. Brown, R., & Kulik, J. (1977). Flashbulb memories. *Cognition*, 5(1), 73-99.
2. Talarico, Jennifer M., and David C. Rubin. "Confidence, not consistency, characterizes flashbulb memories." *Psychological Science* 14.5 (2003): 455-461.