envy, though Fiske notes that among wealthy customers, an aura of exclusivity could make those companies seem more attractive.

A positive interaction with a business has the same components as a positive interaction with a person, Fiske asserts, so corporations' gestures need to be genuine. A mail-in rebate that is impossible to claim will leave customers fuming because they will view the company as deceitful. The companies that earn our trust appear warm and accessible — they list their phone numbers on their websites, make sure that their customer-service lines are staffed properly, and actively solicit feedback. "Sincerity is hard to fake," Fiske says. "People are great fraud detectors."

That's why, although it seems counterintuitive, one of the best times to shore up customer loyalty is when a business has made a significant misstep. In 2009, Domino's Pizza was facing an unusual dilemma: It was rated highest among its competitors for service and speed of delivery, but when it came to taste and quality, it was dead last. When the company began to shoot commercials for its revamped recipes, it featured company employees — including its CEO and the head chef — openly admitting that their old pizza hadn't been very good. The ads even showed focus-group footage of disgruntled consumers complaining that Domino's pizza crust tasted like cardboard. After the ads ran, sales soared, Fiske says.

The key to Domino's success, according to Fiske, was that the company managed to display vulnerability and remorse. By saying that it had failed, Domino's was offering a sincere plea for forgiveness. It wasn't a corporate interaction — it was human.

"The closer a company can get to replicating an honest, person-to-person relationship, the more loyalty it will generate," Fiske says. "Companies do better in the long run if they own their mistakes and try to do right by their customers. Fundamentally, it's just like any successful individual relationship. It's all about respect." *By Amelia Thomson-DeVeaux '11*

Frank Wojciechowski

THREE VIEWS ON PSYCHOLOGY: THE BRAIN AT WORK

# Memory Bank

## Uri Hasson develops a model of how our brains use memories

Uri Hasson, an associate professor of psychology and a member of the Princeton Neuroscience Institute, is developing a model to understand how memory is used by the brain to process information. His work may help clinicians devise better methods for diagnosing memory disorders and provide insights about attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

**What is the conventional way to think about memory?**
The metaphor comes from computer science. In modern computers, there is a separation between the parts that process information and the parts that store memory. In psychology, researchers separate the neural circuits into those that process information from working memory and those used for long-term memory systems. And this has really influenced the way scientists studying the brain think.

**What is your theory?**
Memory and processing are integrated in the brain because we constantly need to combine current and past information. When we engage in conversation, what was said a few seconds ago, a few minutes ago, and even a few hours ago is crucial for processing each incoming word. So I believe there is no separation between memory and processing.

**How does this translate to what actually is taking place in the brain?**
In the brain, you don't see neurons dedicated to memory but not involved in the processing of information. We now know that each neural circuit can do both — retain information over time and dynamically respond to new, incoming information. This simple observation was overlooked by many researchers who have generally thought that in the brain, as in computers, memory functions are separate from the parts that do processing. That model was developed using clever, quick, controlled lab experiments, but, as we found in our research, it is not suitable for the processing of daily-life events — seeing a movie or conversing with a friend. So we started to develop a new model in which memory and processes are combined in each neural circuit. *Interview conducted and condensed by Anna Azvolinsky '09*