

The

Apple Tree

Approach



When the apple fell on Newton's head he didn't cry out, "Yes, well, here I am sitting under a 26 year old tree with red apples about eight centimetres in diameter, and one of them has fallen very quickly, smashed onto my head, and really hurt." It was more like, "Sh**, what was that?"

No matter how technically-minded we are, like all humans, it's most natural to speak in simple terms. It's what we know, and what we are also most inclined to remember.

After 15 years in the business of public speaking, I have found it's critical to focus on keywords in the material I am presenting, for both the benefit of the speaker and the audience.

For the speaker, keywords help you think and cut out the need for detailed scripting. For the audience, keywords allow them to see the core of your message very quickly.

In my book, How to Create and Deliver a Dynamic Presentation, I talk about the importance of keywords as part of what I call the 'Apple Tree Approach' to preparing presentations - and it's a whole lot simpler than Newton's theory of gravity.

There are five key steps.

1. Give your subject material a snappy title.
2. Reduce your material to 'must-know' statements.
3. Reduce your 'must-knows' to keywords.
4. Build 'mini-speeches' around each keyword.
5. Picture up your mini-speeches and make them fun.

1. Give your subject material a snappy title.

It's important to have a theme to your material and to give it a snappy or catchy title. For example, the Apex campaign to raise funds for children's leukaemia research was called 'Help a Kid Make it'. It was simple and easy to remember for all.

2. Reduce your material to 'must-know' statements.

From my experience, I have found that focusing on five 'must-knows' is about the upper limit of most audiences' retention capabilities.

Brainstorm and list what you think are the key facts. Now rank them in order of importance, from the 'must-knows' to the 'should-knows' to the 'nice-to-knows'. Select and focus on the top five.

3. Reduce your 'must-knows' to keywords.

'Keywords' means condensing the essential message of your information into one easily-remembered word or phrase. The keyword you select should be the 'key' to the particular point you are discussing.

I can hear some of you now thinking, "OK, Mr Malouf, this method may be fine for you, but my material is always much more technical and complicated. How can I reduce my mass of information into five keywords? It just can't be done!" Wrong!

Way back in 1977, Apex handed me a four-centimetre thick document on children's leukaemia and asked me to come up with the best way of publicising and presenting a fund-raising project. This document was an encyclopaedia of facts and figures, case studies and strategies.

I knew I had to keep the presentation to the public simple. The goal was to raise \$1 million for the project. I was in charge of getting together a group of people to make presentations on the subject, and to find a novel and easy way to raise the funds.

The answer was simple: 134567. What's 134567 got to do with a million bucks, you may ask? Well, we divided \$1 million by the number of Apex clubs in the country, and realised that each club needed to raise only \$1,345.67 for us to get our million dollars.

Many Apex Clubs wrote to us and said, "We are not yet sure on the details, but it's for a good cause, and here's our cheque for \$1,345.67." Combined with the simple title 'Help a Kid Make it' and a few other keyword concepts and phrases, the fund-raising project was a tremendous success.

Remember, that if you organise and present material to a group of 30 staff over a day and they don't remember a thing, let alone a few key points, the cost to the company could be about the reverse - \$7,654.31 - plus a lot of paper being turned into aeroplanes.

4. Build 'mini-speeches' around each keyword.

A series of mini-speeches around each keyword is much more interesting than one long, boring 'plane-making' speech.

In your mini-speeches it's important to structure your sub-topics such that you:

- **Explain** why you have chosen a particular keyword, by relating it to the subject material.
- **Reinforce** the keywords and material using anecdotes, demonstrations, facts and statistics.
- **Sell** your audience to think about, accept, remember and act upon your keyword material.

5. Picture up and add humour to your material.

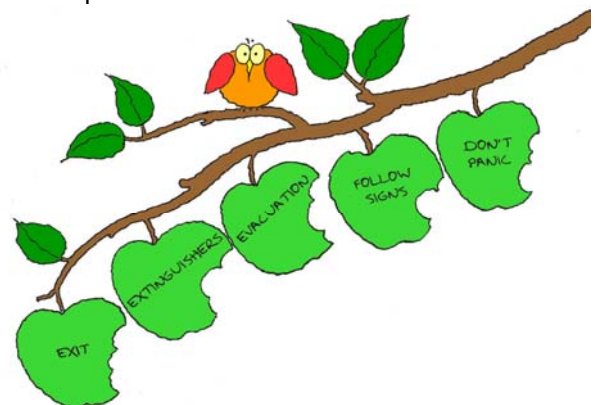
Now, we all know we can use slides, films, videos etc., but it's important to create mental pictures

through stories, humour and other stimulants that are relevant to the subject material. For example, if I was trying to sell you on this keyword concept, I would use the following story to demonstrate. Please read it very carefully.

You are driving a bus which contains 50 people. The bus makes one stop and ten people get off, while three people get on. At the next stop, seven people get off the bus and two people get on. There are two more stops, at which four passengers get off each time. There is mechanical trouble and eight people get off and decide to walk to the next stop. The question is "What was the name of the bus driver?"

At first recall, most of us wouldn't have a clue. There is so much detail in the story that we forget the very first word: 'You'. Get the picture?

The 'Apple Tree Approach' with a focus on getting to the keywords of the material, has been in my experience the best way to get the message across to an audience. The consequences and expense of presenting a speech that the audience does not respond to or learn from can be catastrophic.



They will all be dreaming away, wishing they were outside sitting under an apple tree, or inside perfecting their aerodynamic skills.

Create interest in your subject material first, in the same way that the simple 'Newton and the falling apple' example has always been a student's first introduction to the theory of gravity.

Go to the heart of the subject matter, no matter how technical or complicated it may seem. Leave the detail to a background handout, if necessary.

It's quite simple:

Give them plain information, not plane-making time!

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