

## **Principles to maximise retention of information**

Processing of communication requires the use of short-term memory which has limited capacity. Hence it is important for your message to be interactive and easy to remember.

The consensus now is that, humans can only store around four chunks of new information in short-term memory tasks, plus or minus 1. Hence we can use the rules of three's that we previously discussed. The rule of three's is a writing principle that suggests that things that come in three are inherently interesting, more enjoyable and more memorable than other numbers. The rule of three's recognises a pattern, is more likely to consume information and gives us a structure to work with. This method is simple, powerful and it helps your audience the main points of your message.

### **Here is how you can use this method:**

#### 1) Slice the speech into groups of three

Dale Carnegie, an American writer and lecturer said, "Tell them what you going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you just told them". This advice reminds us that when presenting our message or information, we need to preview and summarize and not just start or end in the middle.

If you have more than three ideas, then you might need to group your ideas into three bigger categories.

#### 2) Use a three part organization structure

Now that you have the preview and summary of your speech, you can organise the middle part of your message by choosing three main ideas.

#### 3) Use the rule of three for phrases, sentences, and words

Try applying the rule of three's to specific phrases, sentences, and words. For example, the phrase "it's no accident" is used three times in the following sentence and it works. "It's no accident that the number three is pervasive in well-known stories...It's no accident that you are likely familiar with these three part quotes...It's no accident that we tell stories with..."

For more information on the rule of three, see--- <http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/business-career/public-speaking/how-to-communicate-better-using-the-rule-of-three>

You can also use the interpretation method. Interpretation is simply an approach to communication that builds on the following principles:

- It is **Entertaining** (pleasurable, fun, visual, interactive)

- It is **R**elevant (meaningful, personal)
- It is **O**rganised (minimum audience effort for maximum reward, structured) and
- It has a **T**heme (Ham, 1992).

It is important to use themes in communicating your message because people tend to forget facts but remember themes. Themes are the basis of changing attitudes and behaviour, can tell stories and can be creative.

When aiming to maximise retention of information, it is also important to understand the extent to which the audience knows about the topic, what they are expecting out of your message, and how much of your message is new to them. If most of your message is new, then it is good to use the methods discussed above.

It is also very important to use facts, statistics that are clear to your audience.

You can also use interactive learning approach in communicating your message. When your audience have some input to your message, they are likely to remember it. It will also make them feel they contributing to your message and their input is appreciated. Hence they are more likely to pay attention to your message. This may lead to maximised retention of the information or even to further research and/or involvement in your topic.

Putting the message in a thought provoking manner can also help the audience to think about your message even after your presentation. This means, you have successfully conveyed your message and your audience managed to remember it.

It is also known that an audience, who are given a hand out after a presentation, are likely to remember the message. Since the handout will serve as a reminder, it is a good idea to use it.

## **Reference List**

Environmental interpretation, Sam Ham, 1992