



Keep your audience on the Edge of their Seats!

Foundational Phrase

Now most people understand the importance of telling a story and making a point. After all, that's the essence of public speaking. But let me ask you this – have you ever seen a story that was all over the place? Now be honest, have you ever given one? Me too, and it happens because we start developing our stories in the wrong place.

We need to start creating our message with our foundational phrase. So what is this? It's the phrase upon which we build our story, our humor, our activities, or whatever other anchors we tend to use. It's also the take away line for our audience members.

So here are a couple of examples of foundational phrases that I use:

- Your dream is not for sale.
- What got you here won't get you there.
- Change small and change often.
- Actions speak louder than words.

Now what did you notice about those foundational phrases? You probably noticed that they're short and to the point. So always remember this – your foundational phrase should be fewer than 10 words.

When I ask my audiences why, they usually say things like, "Well, so your audience will remember it," or "So you'll remember it," and those are good answers, but there's a more important reason. It's because fewer than 10 words forces you to be crystal clear on your message. Trust me. If your message isn't clear to you, it doesn't stand a chance to be clear to your audience.



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There's some folks out there who will say, "Well, if you can write your main message on the back of a business card, that means it's clear enough."

I say to them, "You have absolutely no idea how small I can write." I mean I can write a paragraph on the back of a business card, but fewer than 10 words forces you to be crystal clear.

Again, this is the only lesson that will exceed five minutes, but I think it's so important for you to listen to this live example of me giving a story with a foundational phrase.

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Being the world champion is a blessing and a....[audience answers "Curse"]. You said it.

Now consider this. If you had been walking towards me in the Chicago airport two days after I won the world championship, you would have seen my wife on one side of me, and me carrying this gigantic crystal trophy, just walking through the Chicago airport. And of course everybody's looking at me, like "Who is that? Honey, is that Denzel Washington?" [audience laughing] You don't have to laugh that much! How about Blair Underwood? Flavor Flav? [laughing]

But this is when I realized that my life would never be the same. This petite lady in a pink dress runs up to me in the middle of the concourse – everybody's watching – and she starts reading the bottom of my trophy in front of everybody.

She said, "Hmm, 1999 World Champion of Public Speaking. Hmm. Say some things!" and I was speechless. But that's when I realized that no matter where I go in life, people are going to say, "Hey, would you mind saying some things?"



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Raise your hand if you've been to the Bahamas. Okay. So I go to the Bahamas. I attend a church service. The pastor comes out and says, "You know, we heard you were coming. While you're here, would you mind giving us maybe a 15-minute motivational speech before I start?" How do you turn down God? [audience laughing]

Have you ever been on a teleseminar, as an attendee been on a teleseminar or teleconference? Raise your hand if you've been on the telephone. You been on the telephone? [laughing] You're looking at me like, "What is he talking about?"

So I'm on this teleseminar. I called up and I'm just an attendee. I said, "This is Craig Valentine checking in from Columbia, Maryland," and I'm an attendee. "Craig? Hey, while we have you, before we start can you give us an 10-minute motivational speech?"

I was like, "Now?" But that's when I came to realize a fundamental difference in my life. When it comes to speaking, I can no longer get ready to speak, I have to stay ready to speak. My new motto is, "Don't get ready. Stay ready," because then you can take advantage of all the speaking opportunities there are.

Finish this for me. "Good luck is when preparedness meets...." [audience: "Opportunity"] You want to get lucky? Stay ready. Did that sound like a Viagra commercial at all? [audience laughing]

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Welcome back. Did you get the phrase? Don't get ready, stay ready.

Now here are two more important things you need to know about the foundational phrase.



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1. It's the barometer for your story.

Have you ever asked, "I wonder what I should teach in this story, and I wonder what I should leave out." Well, the answer is easy. If it supports the foundational phrase, keep it in. If it doesn't, throw it out. The phrase determines what stays.

2. The phrase is the take away message for your audience members. It's what they should remember for each story.

Now I'll be the first to tell you, I used to tell stories for the story's sake, but today, because I build my stories on foundational phrases for my audience, it automatically keeps the focus on what they will get out of it, so my messages are much more valuable now.

So that's it! That's the lesson for this week. Do yourself a favor and build upon a foundational phrase. I'll talk to you again next week. Until then, keep speaking up.



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Craig's Top 10 Recommended Resources

1. <http://www.edgeoftheirseats.com/>
2. <http://www.createyourkeynote.com/>
3. <http://www.dynamicdeliverydevices.com/>
4. <http://www.learntoownthestage.com/>
5. <http://www.wcspeaking.com/>
6. <http://www.askcraigvalentine.com/>
7. <http://www.audioforspeakers.com>
8. <http://www.resourcesforspeakers.com>
9. <http://www.thebookonspeaking.com>
10. <http://www.automateyourspeaking.com>

Craig Valentine's Background & Results

Craig Valentine, MBA, an award-winning speaker, management trainer, and speech coach, has traveled the world helping speakers breathe life into their presentations. He has spoken in the United States, Taiwan, Canada, Jamaica, Qatar (Doha), England, Bahamas, Hong Kong, and China. In 1999 he won the World Championship of Public Speaking for Toastmasters International after competing with more than 25,000 contestants from 14 countries.

- *The conference was this past weekend and with your "virtual coaching" I was able to give my own "Killer Keynote". I stood on that stage and gave the speech I had always dreamed of giving-- they laughed where I wanted them to laugh -- they teared up where I wanted to touch them the most -- they came into the scene of my stories -- they heard my message and believed. It was a wonderful moment for me and I will always consider it a gift. Now I would be lying if I said I didn't enjoy the standing ovation at the end...*Susan Lamb-Robinson, Speaker; Toronto, Canada
- *"I now deliver better presentations in 20 minutes than I did in 60 minutes; moreover, my closing ratio has increased 350% thanks to the lessons learned in The Edge of Their Seats Storytelling Home-Study Course. Craig's 9 Step Formula has changed my*



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life. "Kevin D. Gross, MBA, President, Alumni Connection.com
www.AlumniConnection.com

- *I learned more from you in one hour than I have in years of giving speeches. You are a master of your game. Thank you for inspiring me to find my own voice and greatness as a speaker!! Thank you! Pele Raymond Ugboajah; Author, Speaker, Business Coach; DreamBanc, L.L.C.*
- *Craig Valentine is one of America's finest speakers, 1999 World Champion of Public Speaking and author of what I consider to be the bible of public speaking, "Nuts and Bolts of Public Speaking". He's also got several audio and DVD's on the subject. Craig was the driving force and the biggest reason I made it to the World Championships last year in Calgary. The two days I spent with him, in his living room, in Baltimore, completely changed the way approach public speaking...Martin Presse, 2008 Finalist for World Champion of Public Speaking*
- *Hey man I know you are busy but I wanted to bring you up to speed on us. We just returned from San Francisco where we spoke at the national convention of NAMI. It was great. No notes, we both spoke for about an hour. Based on all the comments they liked it. There were a number of people there who had heard us before and they were amazed at the changes we made. Thanks! Bill Neely; www.billandtena.com; Courage in Crisis*
- *Thank you 1000 times over. I just came home from Niagara, what a fantastic time I had. All of your techniques worked. I offered 7 free, 1 hour consultations if booked today offered only in January. I not only booked those I had a line up afterward. Sarah Hilton; Speaker on Mental Health, Toronto*
- *Thanks for your changes...I gave the speech last Monday and everyone raved about it. Thank you so much for your help. I went in very confident, knowing it was a very good speech thanks to your advice and changes. In fact, they hope to get me back again and several said they want to find out where else I am speaking so they can come hear me again. Christine Duvivier; Managing Director, Impact Partners*