



Craig Valentine's
52
Speaking
Tips

Keep your audience on the Edge of their Seats!

Come Out with a Bang

How do most speakers open their speeches? What are some of the first things you usually hear them say? Well, average speakers say things like, "I'm so glad to be here on this wonderful occasion," or "I want to thank the people who brought me in," or "It's such a great day to be here."

Do you know what their audiences are thinking at that point? "So, what! Who cares? This is going to be average at best." And these are all what I call unpleasant pleasantries. They're definitely not the way you want to start a presentation.

I like what my friend and fellow World Champion, Darren LaCroix says, "Look, we don't need a weather report. Most of us were just outside." So we have to understand that within the first 30 seconds our audience will realize whether or not they want to hear more.

The absolutely first thing you say is critical. It can break the ice or it can put your audience on ice. You choose. Here's the real key to a strong first 30 seconds. Do something unexpected, but not uncalled for.

What I mean is you don't want to do something that's just completely bananas, just in the name of being unexpected. Instead, you just want to make sure you come out with a bang. That means you must remove these unpleasant pleasantries. By far, the three best ways to start a speech are the following:

- 1) A story.
- 2) A question.
- 3) A curious statement.



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Let's start with a story, number one. Sometimes I'll approach the stage and, after they finish applauding, the very first thing I say is, "When I was in prison, visiting, an inmate came up after my presentation," and boom, stop right there. I jump right into my story.

It hooks people from the very beginning, which is why a story is the absolute best way to start. It works, because what does the audience really expect? They expect unpleasant pleasantries, like every other speaker gives. So when you dive right into your story they think, "Well, this should be different."

Another way to open is with a powerful question. For example, listen to this 30 second live example of how I opened one of my presentations:

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What do you think is the number one thing that stands in the way of most people becoming great at anything? Themselves? Okay, what else? Fear? What else? Practice.

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Now if I'm speaking to entrepreneurs, I might say, "What do you think is the number one thing that stands between most entrepreneurs getting more customers?" Either way, starting with a question immediately takes your audience from being passive spectators to being active participants. It sets the flavor for how they'll be during the entire speech, because they're going to think, "Well, I guess I'll be involved during this presentation."

The other best way to begin is by making a curious statement. So listen to this one live example of how I started one of my speeches with a statement that made my audience curious.



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I know it sounds strange, but first of all I want to thank you for my nametag. It might not mean much to you, but when I was in Vancouver I don't know how big they thought I was, but they gave me a nametag that hung down here. [audience laughing]

Now, I don't care how confident of an individual you thought you were, you're going to be somewhat self conscious if all weekend long people come up to you and say, "Hey, Craig, how you doing?" [audience laughing]

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Welcome back. Now I should admit, there is another great way to open a speech and it's called the Call Back. However, you're going to pick that up in different speaking tip, because call backs can be used all over the presentation.

Oh, and one last thing, you might ask, "Well, Craig, I still think it's appropriate to thank the people who brought me in and maybe say a few nice words about them and about the occasion."

My response is, "Great, do it. Just don't do it within the first 30 seconds."

Instead, you want to use what I call the sitcom approach. When you watch a sitcom show today, how do they normally open? Usually they begin with a funny scene that sets the premise for the show. Then and only then do they cut to the opening credits and the theme song, which is the equivalent of thanking the audience.



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In other words, they hook you in first, then they cover those other necessities. If you do the same, you'll come out with a bang and you'll have your audience enthralled from the very beginning.

So that's the tip for this week. Until next week, 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*