

Use a Quote to Open Your Talk by Patricia Fripp, CSP, CPAE

You have thirty seconds to command the attention of your audience. Don't waste it! General Eisenhower said, "Leadership is the ability to decide what has to be done and then to get people to want to do it." When I talk on leadership, I might start with that quote. I'm also a believer in quoting mostly others besides Dead White Men--not that many haven't said wonderful things. Consider quoting live individuals. When I'm talking about getting and keeping customers, I say, "As Bill Gates said, 'When you lose a customer, you lose two ways. First, you don't get their money. And second, your competitor does.'" And pantomime stabbing myself in the heart, which usually gets a laugh. Quotes can be both informative and surprising. As the great philosopher Raquel Welch said, "Style is being yourself, but on purpose." I add, "Every time you stand up to address an audience, you have to be yourself, but slightly larger than life, in other words...on purpose."

A great source of quotes is the audience you are addressing or those they know. At a 4 day Texas Instruments conference, I told the audience, "I'm here to tell you how to future-proof your careers." I had heard their chairman use the phrase "future-proof" two days earlier. He said the TI strategy was to future-proof the shareholders' investment. I borrowed his words to connect with the audience, though they were actually technology users, not investors. The phrase already had the company stamp of approval. What made that engagement so successful was the fact I quoted every single person who had spoken on the program before me over the prior three days. Any important or recent quote related to the industry or organization you are addressing can get you immediate attention and establish a connection between you and your listeners. I often quote something from my client's most recent corporate report. Clients tell me, "We're so glad you quoted our Chairman. We always send the report to our associates, but we don't think they ever read it."

GOOD QUOTES CAN BE SPRINKLED THROUGHOUT YOUR TALK

It seems to me, many speakers always use sports stars or often over-quoted sources that the audience is very familiar with.

BE CREATIVE

If your audience has not heard your quotes before, your entire message will seem fresher and more original.

MAKE A LIST OF ORIGINAL SOURCES Do you have any quotes from: - Your father, mother, siblings, grandmother/father - Teacher or coach - First boss or managers who inspired you - Your brilliant or successful clients - Yourself!

HERE ARE SOME OF MINE (Use if you want, just give me credit)

MY FATHER: A.H. Fripp "Don't concentrate on making a lot of money, but rather concentrate on becoming the type of person people want to do business with, and you most likely will make a lot of money."

MY MOTHER: Edie Fripp "Of course it is the inner you that counts, but dress up and look good so you can attract people so they can find out how nice you are, how smart you are, and how valuable you can be to them."

MY BROTHER: Robert Fripp "Discipline is not an end in itself, but a means to an end."

MY BRILLIANT HAIRSTYLING CLIENT: Manny Lozano (In case you did not know, I was a men's hairstylist for 15 years) "Keep promoting even when your appointment calendar is full. You need to resell the clients you have this is still the place they want to come."

JERRY SEINFELD "I will spend an hour editing an eight word sentence into five."

PATRICIA FRIPP "The only thing I ever wanted in business is an unfair advantage."

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