OPENING LINES & ICE BREAKERS FOR SPEAKERS By Ross Shafer

I have been a comedian and public speaker for the past fifteen years. I've found that the best way to warm up an audience and get them on your in the first 30 seconds is NOT to tell a joke. I love jokes but the audience has to trust you before they will laugh with you. So take the time to make the equivalent of a "verbal handshake". Say "Hello" and make a "connection" before you start your talk. The quicker you build a personal rapport with an audience, the sooner they'll be persuaded to listen to your ideas or buy your goods and services.

"Thank you. You know, coming here tonight my (husband)(wife) said..Whatever you do don't try to be too charming, witty or intellectual...just be yourself."

"It's funny, as I was walking up here I was thinking that we all have a lot in common today. None of us know what I'm going to say!?"

"I gave a speech last week and the C.E.O. said I was both original and good. Unfortunately, the parts that were good weren't original and the parts that were original weren't very good..Don't worry, I'll do better today."

"Asking me to speak is like watching a dog walk on his hind legs. Even if it isn't done well, you're amazed it can be done at all."

"Of all the introductions I've received, that was by far the most recent."

"Don't you think it's amazing that 200 of us had dinner together and we all pretty much ordered the same thing?"

"I have a bad feeling about this. Before the meeting (INSERT NAME) said he (she) would be starting the meeting with a joke. Then he introduced me?"

"Before I speak, I've got something important to say... I was told to be accurate. Be brief. And be seated. I promise I will be as brief as possible..no matter how long it takes"

"I've always heard the secret to a good speech was to start with something of specific interest to the audience. O.K. (with a smile) All of your cars have been stolen."

Let's say the person who introduces you gets your facts wrong.

"I have one slight correction in introduction....EVERYTHING!"

After a long, tedious introduction, you could say:

"I guess he(she) decided not to mention my Nobel Prize!"

"After an introduction like that, you probably don't expect too much. I am so relieved to know that I don't have to be any good!"

"Wow! After that introduction..I'm either the wrong speaker or you're the wrong audience."

You're accepting an award.

"The timing of this is perfect. You have no idea how happy I am that I'm <u>not</u> getting this award posthumously"

"Well, I'm not one to exaggerate my accomplishments..but in this case you've done it for me. Thank you."

"Thank you for this token of your kindness, friendship and excellent taste."

"I'm not certain I deserve this but then what's my opinion against all of yours??"

Want a universal joke for ALL occasions?

"On the way up here I heard the perfect story. A Genie grants this salesman a wish. The salesman says "I love Hawaii but I don't like to fly and I hate boats. Could you build a highway from here to Hawaii?"

The Genie says Are you nuts?! Do you have any idea how impossible it would be to sink pilings in the Pacific Ocean?..Or how much concrete and asphalt you'd need for 2,000 miles of highway? Or, even how much trouble it would be to get an environmental impact release?"

The salesman says "OK, then I'd like to know how come our (insert any pertinent business problem here) isn't working. The Genie says "Were you thinking of a one lane highway or two?"

CLOSING REMARKS THAT INSPIRE

If there's one thing I've learned from show business and public speaking...it's that whatever we say or do will have twice the impact if you give it the "Big Finish."

Think about the speakers and leaders you admire. Don't they always leave you with something to think about? Isn't what they've said in the last five minutes what you remember?

Sure it is. So to be effective, let me pass on some tips about closing remarks.

First of all, DO NOT close with questions from the audience. You have no control over which question will be asked or if your answer will be inspirational. And you certainly don't want your presentation to dribble out like this (weakly).."well. if there are no further questions..I guess.. I'm...done. Am I done? Alright, then...good night."

Your Closing Remarks need to mean something..to call the troops to action..or to get them thinking. Don't take them lightly. And, don't ad lib. The world's best entertainers, politicians, and trial lawyers don't ad lib. They rehearse.

So, rule number one is, "Know your closing story by heart...be passionate...confident...and DO NOT read it from notes. Here are some examples.

WHAT DO YOU SAY WHEN YOU'VE HAD A GREAT YEAR AND YOU WANT NEXT YEAR TO BE EVEN BETTER?

We've done very well and I am very proud of all of you. But, how do we push the envelope and come up with new ideas? How do we surpass ourselves? Well, Nolan Bushnell, the founder of Atari Games said "everyone who's ever take a shower has a brilliant idea. It's the person who gets out of the shower, dries off and does something about it who makes all the difference". So, I say.. shower often and dry off here!

WHAT IF YOU WANTED TO CLOSE WITH SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR COMPETITION.

I heard a story about a traveler who visited a Greek monastery that was perched high on a steep mountain. The only way to reach the monastery was in a rope basket. The traveler got into the basket, and just as he was about to be taken up the steep cliff wall, he noticed that the rope lifting the basket was frayed. He asked the monk. "How often is the rope replaced?" The monk said, "every time it breaks". That has been the attitude of (your competition). I say..let's replace the rope before it breaks and take our rightful position as number one in this industry!

WHEN YOU WANT TO INSPIRE CREATIVIY, USE THIS ONE.

We need to look around and get creative. See things that others don't see. How many of you know the story of Betty Nesmith? Well, in 1951, Betty was a secretary who realized that the electric typewriter, while it was a wonderful office too, seemed to also multiply typing errors. So she concocted a mixture of water based paint and a coloring agent that matched the bank's stationary. Soon everyone wanted to use Betty's correction fluid. By 1956, she quit her bank job and sold the fluid full time. In 1979, Gillette bought her Liquid Paper Corporation for 47.5 million dollars. The sole heir to her fortune is her son, Michael Nesmith, leader of the 60's rock group THE MONKEES.

What opportunities are right under our noses? What lemon could we turn into

lemonade? While our competition is sleeping, what can wee do that would really make them squirm? That is our challenge this year. And, I can't wait to see how we meet it! Thank you.

LET'S SAY YOU WANT TO RELAY YOUR APPRECIATION FOR EVERYONE'S CONTRIBUTION AND HARD WORK.

We've lost a great humanitarian in Mother Teresa. But, she left many things behind and one of them was a lesson for us.

Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, she said that "when we work hard all day long, it feels like we are only a drop in the ocean. But if our individual drops were not in the ocean..the ocean would be dry."

Each one of you is a drop in OUR ocean. And, without each of you we would be empty and dry. Please. Never forget how important you are. Thank you.

HERE IS A GOOD ONE IF YOU'RE ADDRESSING THE PEOPLE IN THE PLANT.

As you know, there are talkers, lookers and do-ers. I remember a story about a rural bus driver who spotted an old farmer loaded down with packages on the side of the road. The driver stopped. The farmer stepped into the bus, looked around and got off. The driver asked "Where are you going, Pops?" The farmer said "I ain't going nowhere..I was just wanted to see who was". You're the kind of people who'd get on that bus. And, you make me proud to be your driver!

CUSTOMER SERVICE IS ALWAYS A GREAT CLOSER.

The trouble with many of us in the business world is that we are thinking hardest of all about the dollar we want to make. Now that is the wrong idea from the start. I'll tell you the man who has the idea of service in his business will never need to worry about profits. The money is bound to come. This idea of service in business is the biggest guarantee of success that any man can have. Henry Ford said that 80 years ago. And now he's foretelling our future.

Let's make him right, again.

WHAT KIND OF CLOSER DO YOU USE WHEN THINGS AREN'T GOING SO WELL? JUST BE HONEST.

I realize this has been a tough year and morale is low. But, we need to stop infighting. Because it's infectious. And where does that infection start. In your minds. So watch your thoughts. They become your actions. Watch your actions. They become your habits. Watch your habits. They become your character. Watch your character. Your character becomes your destiny. Let's look inside ourselves and go out and create our destiny today.

So, there you go. My advice is to take the "closers" you like and that fit your situation and rehearse them with passion and enthusiasm. If you know and believe in your Big Finish well enough, it will come from your heart. And if you can do that, you'll make a huge impact and inspire people to achieve things they never thought possible.

THE END (really)

To get more info about Ross Shafer visit: www.RossShafer.com