

Stop calling it Keynote Speech and start calling it Show

Imagine you are attending a conference.

It's been a long three days with training, networking, general sessions, trade shows, and balancing work back home. You are tired and ready to head back home, but there is the closing general session.

Someone says this to you, *"Hey are you excited for the closing keynote speech?"*

What if we altered that perspective a little and they rephrased it, *"Hey, are you excited and sticking around for the closing show – I hear it's supposed to be incredible!"*

In the first example, it seems like something to do to meet the agenda requirements. It lacks energy and excitement. If you leave early, you don't really feel bad or like you are missing anything. However, the second example rouses thoughts of curiosity and excitement.

In nearly three decades of giving opening and closing speeches at meetings and events, here is my observation, a very small percentage of people get "authentically" excited about a keynote speech. However, a majority of people will always get more excited about a show. Just that small change in word choice can change the attitude, energy, and excitement towards the opening and closing to your events.

The day before the fourth of July, I see people in my town claiming their spots with lawn chairs. They are arriving early and planning to get the best seat in the house. But, wait – isn't it essentially the same show year after year? So, if it's the same show, why do people arrive early and plan for getting the best seat in town – closest to the action?

Because they are excited for the show. They trust the experience.

Have you ever wondered why when people attend a general session, they mostly always sit and fill up the back of the room first? Is it because everyone has bladder issues and sitting in the back of the room means they are closer to the bathroom? NO WAY.

It means there is no trust. They don't trust the experience. Inconsistency breaks trust.

When you buy tickets to a sporting event or concert, do you look for tickets that are the farthest from the action? No, you look to see how close you can get that fits within your budget. Right? And why is that? Because you trust the experience to be worth it.

And yes, some people love sitting near the front. But, when it comes to a speech, meetings or training – a good majority will fill up the back first. Some will arrive early just to get a seat in the back to avoid being near the experience from the stage. This is mostly because nobody wants to get trapped close to a situation that doesn't captivate

them. I get it, it can't all be bells and whistles from the main stage, but watch how many people fill up your front versus the back first at your annual events. This should communicate something to you.

Back to the July Fourth example.

When people arrive early to get seats closest to the action, it's because they trust the experience will be worth it. So, what if you applied this same concept to your meetings and events? What if instead of calling it an opening keynote or closing keynote, you retitled it, "The Opening Show!" or "The Closing Show!?"

And, here is one other interesting perspective on the Fourth Of July example. Nobody rushes home before it's over! WHAT???! Yes, people actually look forward to the Grand Finale. Nobody says, "*Well, we need to leave early to beat traffic.*" NO WAY! Everyone will endure crazy traffic and extra mosquito bites just to experience the Grand Finale – which again is essentially the same show as prior years. Why is that? They trust the experience.

It doesn't happen overnight. It takes time to build or rebuild trust so your attendees get super excited about the start of the event and the closing. My clients have me back over and over again because they trust the experience I will create in their opening or closing sessions – sometimes both. However, they also listen to the feedback of the audience. Over 89% of my clients have the policy, "one and done." That means they have a speaker once and move on to something new. That is HORSE POTATOES! If you find or discover a crowd favorite, this is like finding gold for your events. You can leverage your crowd favorites to build more excitement, engagement, increase registration, or boost early registration. There are so many ways you can leverage your crowd favorites.

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