Create Something They’ll Always Remember

Place *Something They’ll Always Remember*—a climactic S.T.A.R. moment—in your presentation to drive your big idea home. That moment is what the audience will chat (or tweet) about after your talk. It can also help your message go viral through social media and news coverage. Use it to make people uncomfortable with what is or to draw them toward what could be. Here are four ways to create a S.T.A.R. moment that captivates your audience and generates buzz.

*Shockling statistics*

If statistics are shocking, don’t glide over them—amplify them. For example, in his 2010 Consumer Electronics Show presentation, Intel CEO Paul Otellini used startling numbers to convey the speed and impact of the company’s newest technology. “Today we have the industry’s first-shipping 32-nanometer process technology. A
32-nanometer microprocessor is 5,000 times faster; its transistors are 100,000 times cheaper than the 4004 processor that we began with. With all respect to our friends in the auto industry, if their products had produced the same kind of innovation, cars today would go 470,000 miles per hour. They’d get 100,000 miles per gallon, and they’d cost three cents.”

**Evocative visuals**

Audiences connect with emotionally potent visuals. When asking donors to help raise $1.7 million, Conservation International contrasted dreamy, glistening, surreal under-ocean images (captioned with phrases like “90% of our oxygen” describing how dependent we are on the ocean) with photos of grimy rubbish that washes up on the beach (where “14 billion pounds of trash” roll in on the waves). That approach tapped the power of evocative visuals and shocking stats—and people responded by getting out their wallets.

**Memorable dramatization**

Bring your message to life by dramatizing it. As Bill Gates spoke about the importance of malaria eradication at a TED conference in 2009, he released a jar of mosquitoes into the auditorium and said, “There is no reason only poor people should be infected.” It got the audience’s attention—and effectively made the point that we don’t spend nearly enough money on fighting the disease. The mosquitoes were malaria-free, but he let people squirm a minute or two before he let them know that.

Consider another example. When Mirran Raphaely, CEO of Dr. Hauschka Skin Care, presented to the cos-
metrics industry, she wanted to draw a sharp contrast between industrial agriculture and biodynamic farming practices. She showed two photos side by side—a container of chemicals and an herb called horsetail—and compared the toxicity of the two substances. In industrial agriculture, farmers rely on glyphosate, a synthetic chemical linked to cancer in animals and humans. In biodynamic agriculture, farmers treat crops with an extract made from horsetail. Holding up two glasses—one filled with the chemical weed killer, the other with the horsetail extract—she asked the audience, “Which one of these would you want on the crops you consume?” After the audience finished laughing, she took a sip of the biodynamic solution.

**Emotive anecdote**

Sometimes S.T.A.R. moments are gripping personal stories (see “Add Emotional Texture” earlier in this section).

Here’s one such story, told by Symantec.cloud group president Rowan Trollope in May 2012, to encourage his organization to innovate:

> I went mountain climbing at Mount Laurel, in the eastern Sierras, with two of my friends. I’m not very experienced, but both of them were even less experienced. We’d been climbing for about 19 hours. We were up at 11,000 feet, and it was getting dark. Fast.

> We needed to get down the side of this mountain . . . and we needed to do it fast. Descending first, I got to a ledge and started to get our line ready.

> Climbers carry two emergency pitons with them for just this purpose. I’d never used them before, but I knew
how they worked. I took out my hammer and started hammering one into the rock. The books tell you that you’ll hear the tone of the hammer strike change when it’s “in.” I heard a loud ping with each strike of the hammer and decided it was in “good enough.”

The books also tell you, though, to always use two, so I used two. As I hammered in the second one, I heard a sharp, high-pitched ping at the end, so I tied the knots and got our line ready. By this time, my buddies had reached the ledge, and I started to hook us in.

Something was bugging me. I looked at the knot between the two pitons and it looked like this [prop: climbing rope with two pitons]. The problem with a knot like that is that if one piton fails, you’ll fall. You need to tie it instead like this [prop: retie knot].

My buddies were all clipped in and wanted to get going. It was getting darker. The way I tied the knot seemed good enough, but something in the back of my head told me to stop. So I did.

We all unclipped, and I retied the knot, and then we clipped in again and started the climb down.

The moment I put weight on my line, the first piton popped out and hit me smack in the middle of the helmet. Had I not unclipped and retied the knot, I would have died on that ledge. My life rushed through my mind. And I suddenly and irrevocably got the danger of “good enough.”

When I pounded in that first piton, I decided it was good enough.

When I tied the knot that first time, I decided that it wasn’t, so I did it again.
I still have that piton that popped out. I brought it with me today because I thought you might like to see it [prop: piton]. The other one? The one that saved my life? It’s still in a crack on the Laurel Cliffs. Still doing its job.

I came back to work, and everything had new meaning for me. Retying my knots became a sort of metaphor. I realized that in every job I did, every project I touched, I was making piton decisions every time. I was deciding, with every one of those moves, whether good enough was good enough for me.

I picked that story for today because I think we’re facing a similar climb as a company. And we’re making piton decisions every day. For my buddies and me, there was nothing but sky beneath us. When you and I look down, we see the PC business changing dramatically. We can see physical things being driven into the cloud, and we can agree that the Internet is not yet a secure place.

Unfortunately, it will take more than one piton to address these dangers. But I think it starts by reawakening in our company some of the qualities that made us great in the first place. And to do that, I think we need to change how we approach our work.