Curiosity Killed The Cat, But...

If you've seen one of the popular CSI-type shows, how do they typically open?

A dead body is found by an unsuspecting passer-by. You immediately start asking questions:

"Who is that person?"

"How did she die?"

"Who killed her?"

These shows are terrific at creating curiosity. During the ensuing 60 minutes, your questions are answered as the mystery unfolds and the killer(s) is revealed.

What keeps your attention through the program?

Not knowing who did the deed. If the killer is revealed in the opening, you might still watch, but only because you have nothing better to do. There would be no suspense or tension.

An old adage says that 'Curiosity killed the cat.' I'm not sure why it killed tabby, but I do know that without curiosity, your story will die.

Listeners need a compelling reasons to listen to your narrative to its conclusion. The best way to keep their interest is to create questions in their minds.

The answers to those questions is the payoff for them. It's why they stay to the end. The best place to create questions is in your opening.

Although there are many ways to open your presentation, three of the most effective are:

1) Jump right into your story

2) Recite a quote

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3. Ask a direct question

Some presenters love to jump right into their stories. You can describe an interesting scene, make a startling statement, or describe a character to grab attention and arouse curiosity.

For example, "*Judy walked into my office, and slumped into the chair next to my desk. She sat quietly, staring out of the window.*

You could tell that she had been crying. There were dark circles under her eyes. Her hair was a mess. She look like she'sd aged 10 years in the last month."

Has this scene piqued your interest?

Why was Judy crying?

Why did she look so bad?

What happened one month ago?

These questions sustain people's attention because you've aroused their curiosity.

A different approach is the second tool, quotes. These are useful if they set up your story.

In my program '*Ignite Your Passion, Take ACTION!*' I sometimes open with this quote:

"The late speaker Jim Rohn once said, '*The pain of action weighs ounces compared to the pain of regret, which weighs tons*.' "

These words create questions about regret and action, and orients listeners to the upcoming material. They're curious to see where the presentation is going and how it can help them.

When using quotes, be sure they relate specifically to your topic. Many speakers fall into a trap of using quotes because they sound good, not because they support the main point. Unrelated quotes can confuse, and even irritate audiences when they don't add to your message.

World Champion speaker Darren LaCroix, CSP, makes this suggestion: "Don't use a quote unless it has specifically had impact on you, and made a change in your life." This is excellent advice.

The third tool, questions, can create immediate involvement for the listener. For example, a financial advisor could ask an audience "*If you had to retire today, how long would your money last?*" Or, "*If you didn't make it home tonight, how long could your family live in your home and maintain their lifestyle?*"

Don't these questions engage you on an emotional level?

Would you like to at least hear some ideas to help answer those questions?

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In just two sentences, you're involved in the presentation, and waiting to hear more. Asking questions can create an emotional connection with listeners, and keep their interest from start-to-finish.

Keep this important point in mind. As critical as it is to create curiosity, it's equally important to answer those questions. Left unanswered, they leave the audience feeling unfulfilled, confused, or even irritated. Create curiosity, but also make sure you satisfy it before you walk away.

Yes, curiosity may have killed the cat. But, not creating it will kill your story. To involve your audience, create questions in their minds. Gain interest, and you'll have their attention from start to finish.

ACTION STEP: Review your story to determine if you're creating curiosity. Do your stories and quotes create questions that grab the audience's attention? Are you spurring questions early in the presentation? Also, are you answering all of the questions by the end of your narrative.

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