

How One Line Can Make or Break a Speech

A Case Study in Powerful Calls to Action in Speech Delivery Training



THE CLIENT

Terri Marcroft is the founder and executive director of **Unplanned Good Inc.** This nonprofit, nonpolitical, nonreligious organization is devoted to:

- **Promoting adoption as a positive option** for women facing unplanned pregnancies
- **Caring for the women** who choose adoption
- **Decreasing the cost** of adopting



THE OPPORTUNITY

In 2024, Ms. Marcroft **earned an opportunity to speak for the first time on a national stage** to state legislators at the Live Action Lawmakers Summit in Chapel Hill, N.C. She had two goals:

- **To educate legislators** about a little-known truth: that **laws on the books** in most states today make it **hard for women to learn about and choose adoption**, which has changed dramatically in the last 25 years
- **To motivate legislators** to champion legislation that **shines a new light on adoption**, and **makes adoption easier for birth mothers**, so more women choose it

THE CHALLENGE

Ms. Marcroft wanted to **collaborate** with a thought partner and speechwriter to craft a **keynote presentation empowering state lawmakers** to:

- **Build on the legislative work** already begun in states like Idaho
- **Champion new laws in their own state** promoting adoption and birth mother support, which would likely produce some positive legislative wins and energize their constituents

But for most lawmakers going into the summit, **adoption legislation was not a priority**. In fact, just like most people, lawmakers were generally **unfamiliar** with modern adoption processes and their own state's adoption laws.

So how could Ms. Marcroft, an adoptive mother herself, get lawmakers to **care enough** about adoption and birth mother support to **take action in their own state** after leaving the summit?

- What **case** could she make?
- How could she appeal to their **minds** and **hearts**?
- And perhaps most importantly: **What should her final call to action be to inspire the audience to take the next step after leaving the summit?**

Once her keynote was finalized, Ms. Marcroft also wanted to work with an **executive speech coach** providing **speech delivery training** so she could deliver her remarks onstage with **presence** and **power**.

THE SOLUTION

Ms. Marcroft opened her talk by **praising a birth mother**, Dominique, who had just told her own story about **why she chose to place her baby for adoption**. Ms. Marcroft explained that Dominique's choice was rare: Just 1% of women facing an unplanned pregnancy choose adoption since **most people just don't know that adoption is an option**.

After laying bare all the problems with adoption laws today, Ms. Marcroft insisted that as a society, we can do better, telling lawmakers that they have the power to take the lead: **"You can champion legislation that shines a new light on adoption, and makes adoption easier for birth mothers, so more women choose it."**

"It is possible!" she said, ticking off **recent legislative wins** in Idaho, which had just gotten three new bills passed into law and was poised to introduce four new bills next session.

Ms. Marcroft explained with emotion why **"there are no secrets anymore"** when it comes to adoption. Instead, "just so many possibilities for **loving relationships**."

"Change **IS** possible," she said. "And it starts with **YOU**."

Lawmakers who introduce new bills have a **"huge opportunity for legislative wins since adoption and birth mother support is hard to argue with."**

To make it easier for lawmakers to prioritize adoption legislation, Ms. Marcroft said she would be "honored to **help and support you**."

"Today, I am sharing **templates of several bills** to get you started. You can use this QR code to download these templates right now. Later, if you need a **speaker**, or want **counsel** on adoption best practices, and why they are so much better than before, call me.

"And if you need **testimony** in committee later on? I'll jump on a Zoom call and testify for you! Or come in person if I can."

She'd made a strong case. And now it was time to close.

But she couldn't just end it.

She needed a **powerful call to action**. She had to make it **memorable**. And she had to make it **quick** since her allotted time was nearly up.

She had to be intentional with her delivery.

Here's what Ms. Marcroft boldly and succinctly said to **empower lawmakers to take the next step**.

"So let's **GET TO WORK!**

"Let's **FIGHT** for **ADOPTION** and **BIRTH MOTHER SUPPORT!**

- "This path is **RATIONAL** ...
- "This path is **REAL** ...
- "And this path is **within your REACH**."

"The only question now is **THIS**:

"Will you **DECIDE** to **TAKE IT?**"



THE RESULTS

Speech delivery training a week before the event helped Ms. Marcroft deliver every line of her keynote with **confidence** and **ease** at the summit, on Aug. 10, 2024. Later that day, Ms. Marcroft said:

"The speech went so well!! **These legislators now have adoption on their radar!** Many legislators have come to talk with me! So grateful for your partnership in my speaking adventures!"

One year later:

- Idaho passed **five more bills** into law.
- Lawmakers in **four more states** – so far – have **introduced bills** in their own legislatures.
- Ms. Marcroft landed **several more national speaking engagements**, including an invitation to return to the 2025 Lawmakers Summit, so she could continue to make her case about **how to reform adoption laws in individual states**.



Said Ms. Marcroft: "Often, states will use other states' trailblazing bills as templates – but only if they know about them! **Getting the word out is most efficiently done at a conference like this**, where lawmakers are gathered."

Marcroft's speech, "Let's Shine a New Light on Adoption – and Make Adoption Easier for Birth Mothers – So More Women Choose It," won the 2025 Cicero Speechwriting Award in the Public Policy category.

[Read the entire speech here.](#)



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