## How One Line Can Make or Break a Speech

## ZUMWALD AND COMPANY

# 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:

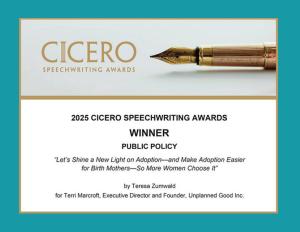
- Idaho passed five more bills into law.
- Lawmakers in four more states so far have introduced bills in their own legislatures.
- Ms. Marcroft landed several more national speaking engagements, including an invitation to return to the 2025 Lawmakers Summit, so she could continue to make her case about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



If you need help with an important speech or presentation, including executive speech coaching for speech delivery training, contact us.

