

“Esteves, This is Your Moment: Go Ahead and Jump”

Motivational Speech (International Audience)

SPEECH OPENING

If you were here in Atlanta 21 years ago, you would have seen an incredible sight:

Because back in July of 1996, more than 10,000 athletes from around the world were gathered right here – in this historic and beautiful place known as Centennial Olympic Park – to compete in the Summer Olympic Games.

I'll never forget it!

The theme in '96 was “Summon the Heroes,” and I remember right after the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra played a rousing rendition of the “Star-Spangled Banner,” the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds came screaming over the stadium in their F-16 fighter jets.

That year, 3.5 billion people watched the games on TV – something most of us will be doing again when the 2018 Winter Olympics begins in February over in South Korea.

A big event at the Winter Games is always **ski jumping** – the chance for some of the world's best athletes to glide down a steep hill and then up over a bump, which propels them into the air at amazing speeds – something like 90 kilometers per hour.

There's a trick to it: The ski jumper must remain in the air – flying aloft! – for as long as possible before landing and gliding down another hill, trying to remain in control throughout the entire ordeal.

Watching a ski jumper fly through the air takes your breath away!

But even more so 30 years ago, when the world watched amateur ski jumper Michael Edwards of Great Britain compete in the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary.

Do you remember Edwards – the guy the world knew as Eddie the Eagle?

Nobody thought Eddie was Olympic material.

In fact, many people told him so.

But Eddie didn't care. His only dream was getting to the Olympics.

He started as a downhill skier – but failed to qualify in 1984. So in 1986, he switched to ski jumping and started traveling around Europe, entering competition after competition to qualify for the 1988 Olympics.

For Eddie, the road to Calgary was not an easy one.

Because he had no money and no financial backers, Eddie worked odd jobs in between jumps, and wore a secondhand helmet and boots that didn't fit.

He was so farsighted, he had to wear glasses under his goggles. And when they misted up in midair during a jump, he couldn't even see where he was going.

But even that didn't matter. Because Eddie ALWAYS carried on.

Finally, at a competition in Switzerland, Eddie jumped 68 meters – a British record distance! – and qualified for the 1988 Winter Olympics.

And he did it in record time: When he arrived in Calgary ready to compete, 24-year-old Eddie had just two years of ski jumping experience under his belt!

Compare that to his Olympic competitors, who had been ski jumping ever since they were little boys!

But Eddie's sheer grit and determination to get there – to take ski jumping seriously and realize his lifelong dream of getting to the Olympics – gained him attention by the press, and fans around the world.

He became an unforgettable figure of the 1988 Winter Games.

And last year, a movie was made about his journey to Calgary.

It was called “Eddie the Eagle,” and I watched it with my kids, absolutely fascinated by every twist and turn.

The movie takes a little poetic license, that’s for sure. But the essence of the story is true: Eddie the Eagle Edwards went to the ends of the earth, and defied all the odds, in order to compete.

He focused on his dream, and he didn’t let anything stop him.

He had **courage**. He took **risks**. And he stayed **determined** – no matter what.

To get there, he practiced **discipline** – often jumping as many as 60 times a day.

In the movie, he **asked for help** from a former Olympic ski jumper named Bronson Peary. Bronson taught Eddie how to land, and later became his coach and biggest fan.

Eddie was **resilient**, crashing on the slopes and injuring himself badly more than once. But every time he crashed, he put it behind him. And he **never gave up**.

He did **one jump at a time**, first the 40-meter ... and then the 70-meter ... and then finally in Calgary the dangerous 90-meter jump, where he landed on both feet, and set his own personal best record.

Through it all, Eddie **never sold himself short**. And he **never stopped jumping**.

He always remembered what Bronson Peary told him from the beginning: that **the foundation of any jump is the takeoff**. He had to get that right.

In 1988, Eddie became a hero in Great Britain, and a hero of the Games, because he lived the true Olympic spirit.

Eddie reminds us what can happen when we **start with the proper takeoff**, and are brave enough to **jump**.

Or – like Eddie did – when we are brave enough to make a series of jumps, **one jump at a time.**

Here at our company, everything we have been doing since we got together a year ago has set the right foundation for the proper takeoff, and the right circumstances for a series of new jumps.

Let's look for a moment and see where we stand.

EXCERPT 1

In many cases, these are things we have never done before.

And they will require from all of us more **confidence** ... more **analysis** ... more **communication** ... more **customer cooperation** ... and more **teamwork** than ever before.

Every one of these is a jump – and it's thrilling!

And yet?

All of us face the **same dilemma** that Eddie Edwards faced the day he decided he was **going for that 90-meter ski jump in Calgary** – because he'd **never done it before.**

He starts hearing a lot of voices talking inside his head.

They say things like:

- “Eddie, you are not an athlete!”
- “You tried your best but it wasn't good enough, was it?”
- “You will never be Olympic material.”

And Eddie freezes!

For a few moments, you wonder if he's bailing out!

But then as you watch, you feel his resolve as he takes a giant breath ... squares his jaw ... sets his goggles ... leans forward ... glides down the slope ... hits that bump ... makes the takeoff ... and flies through the air!

And then – after what seems like a very, very long time! – he lands!

He's down!

And he recovers!

The crowd in Calgary goes absolutely WILD!!!

And the broadcasters seize the moment by shouting:

“The Eeeeeeeaaagle has laaaaaanded!!!”

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For Eddie the Eagle – and for the entire crowd – that moment was pure joy!

But – when started at the top of that mountain – **he hesitated.**

His greatest desire was to **make that jump** – but it was something he'd **never done before.**

The same is true for all of us here.

Because just like Eddie – when you're taking things to the next level ... when you decide you're going to take a risk and jump – neither the **distance of your run** nor the **safety of your landing** are guaranteed.

We may want to take a risk and make a jump – but there are more than a few unknowns.

Just like Eddie, you may hear a lot of voices talking inside your head:

- “If I take a risk and make a jump, **how far will it get us?** Or for that matter, **will it move us forward at all?**”

- “And what happens if what I do is **not successful**? Or for that matter, puts us in a **worse position than before**?”

Fear can paralyze us!

To get past it, we need **everything that Eddie had**:

- We need **courage** – enough to take **a little more risk**.
- We need **determination** and **discipline** – and the **ability to ask for help** – especially when things get a little more difficult than we imagined.
- We need to **be resilient** – to put setbacks behind us, and never give up.

We must refuse to get overwhelmed with all the jumps that lie ahead of us – all the changes we are daring to make at this company!

- Instead, we must focus on making **one jump at a time**.
- We need to look at the flip side of our humility, acknowledging that the **value we bring to customers** is worth **something more** – and **never sell ourselves short**.
- We need to decide that we will **NEVER stop jumping**.

EXCERPT 2

As we learned from Eddie the Eagle, the foundation of any good jump is the takeoff.

In the movie, Bronson Peary calls it **the jumping paradox**.

“The paradox is simultaneously stretching up and leaning into your descent,” he tells Eddie. “It’s unnatural because you actually take off downwards. Your body has gotta lean forward in order to give you the lift. Like the wing of a bird.”

Bronson explains further, “Your skis go up, your legs go back. Your body goes forward and you go down, all while falling at 70 miles per hour.

“Up, back, forward, down,” Bronson says.

Here at our company, we're experiencing our own "jumping paradox," because we are doing so many new things all at the same time.

So it may feel a bit unnatural.

But just like Eddie learned, **you have to lean forward in order to get the lift.**

EXCERPT 3

I know that you have a lot of good ideas.

In fact, many of you are already standing at the top of a new mountain right now, ready and waiting to glide down that slope ... hit that bump ... and then JUMP!

And when you do?

Everyone here will be watching you fly and seeing you land and cheering you on!

How well will you do?

If you're an Olympic ski jumper, how well you do is determined by the judges.

Scoring is based on DISTANCE and STYLE, both in flight and in landing.

As a ski jumper, you get points for **distance** – **how far you actually went.**

And you get points for **style** – **how you got there.** That means how steady and balanced you were during the flight, and how well you landed.

If you're a ski jumper whose style is poor, you'll lose points – and probably won't make a very good distance.

The same thing is true for all of us here ...

SPEECH CLOSING

In the movie “Eddie the Eagle,” one of my favorite scenes is right before Eddie takes that 90-meter jump we just talked about.

Bronson Peary, who’s by now Eddie’s coach, says to him, “You gotta do it. This is your moment.”

And Eddie says, “I don’t know what I was thinking ... I need a practice jump.”

But Bronson doesn’t let him off the hook.

He says, “What do you need to know you don’t know already? It’s higher than you’ve jumped before, you’re gonna go faster than you’ve gone before, you’re gonna fly farther ... but it’s just a jump. You know, it’s simple.”

And then Bronson goes on to tell Eddie:

“You got more dedication, you got more heart and spirit than any of those jumpers out there. Any of them. ... I mean, are you gonna give up now? At the Olympics? This is your moment. You’re Eddie the Eagle, man. Proud of you.”

And so I say to all of you key managers gathered here at Centennial Olympic Park:

You have more dedication, more heart and more spirit than any other contenders out there.

This is your moment.

The time is right.

And you are ready.

- You are the right people.
- You have the right structure.
- And you are working the right strategy.

This is your moment.

So go ahead and jump.

One jump at a time!

And never – ever – stop jumping.

Thank you.