

One Great Way to Open a Presentation

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on October 9th, 2013



It was October 9, 2005. I gave a presentation to 225 [Junior League of Dallas](#) members. It was an awesome group of women. A Dallas lawyer had asked me to speak. There were many other lawyers in the audience, and many other young, and not so young, professionals.

I began like this:

Can any of you tell me the date today?

Several in the audience called out "October 9th."

I continued: As you will read in the handout materials, October 9, 1978 was a defining moment in my life. My daughter, Jill was born 6 weeks prematurely that day and the Doctors didn't know if she, or my wife Nancy, would pull through. (I think the photo below was from about Thanksgiving that year.) Why am I telling you that? Well, one reason is that I am thinking of my daughter today.



But, more importantly for our time together, I want you to visualize why it was **easier** to have both a successful career and a fulfilling life then. Think about it, we had no internet, no cell phones, no ATM machines, no social media, no email. We didn't even have computers on our desk.

It was easier then, to *"be in the moment"* both at work and when we were home with our families.

Now we have too much abundance, but not nearly enough time to enjoy it. We have too many choices and not nearly enough help making the right ones. We have too much technology, and not nearly enough freedom from it. We have too much focus on outward success, and not nearly enough focus on inward fulfillment.

Today, it is more important than ever to take control of your career and life. Over the next hour I will give you a roadmap on how to do it.

For the next hour the Junior League members were engaged. Most took detailed notes and many came up to me afterwards with comments and questions.

Why were they interested? In my opening I had done three things.

1. I asked them a question.
2. I told them a story and I tied the story to them.
3. I was able to answer the subconscious question each member was asking: "What is in this presentation for me?"

Your audiences will ask themselves the same question. Do you have a good answer?

P.S. I wrote an article in the [Texas State Bar Journal](#) about how that October 9, 1978 caused me to become more focused on my priorities: [Crossroads: Strategy for Career and Life](#). I hope you find valuable ideas for your own career and life.

If you have done the math, you know that Jill is 35 today. She teaches special education to some really neat, but challenged youngsters. Last week she sent me this email:

I had such a successful day today. I told the story of Gator Greg. He is an alligator that sleeps in a pond and while he is sleeping crawfish swim to lily pads. When Gator Greg wakes up he goes and eats the largest number of crawfish and his mouth turns into the greater than, or less than sign. I told this story before when we were comparing numbers.

When learning decimals we said that the whole numbers were adult crawfish, the numbers in the tenths place were the crawfish babies and the numbers in the hundredths place were the crawfish eggs before they hatched. They really got it! Kids with IQs in the 50s to 90s, supposedly on a kindergarten level, all understood 4th grade math!

Then my 3rd graders were really struggling with adding with carrying and they were getting frustrated. So I brought out the shaving cream and allowed them to write their math problems in the shaving cream. One of the kids, who normally doubts himself, proclaimed that I was the "most

awesomest teacher ever” Both 3rd graders understood addition with carrying by the end of the class.

I am sure your father is proud of you. So I am sure you understand I am proud of Jill and her work with her students. I understand why she had a great day, having been honored by a third grader as the “most awesomest teacher ever.” It doesn’t get much better than that.

Final thought: If Jill can find creative ways to become the “most awesomest teacher ever,” for her special students, don’t you think you can come up with creative ways to become the “most awesomest lawyer ever” for your clients?

Cordell M. Parvin built a national construction practice during his 35 years practicing law. At Jenkins & Gilchrist, Mr. Parvin was the Construction Law Practice Group Leader and was also responsible for the firm’s attorney development practice. While there he taught client development and created a coaching program for junior partners. In 2005, Mr. Parvin left the firm and started Cordell Parvin LLC. He now works with lawyers and law firms on career development and planning and client development. He is the co-author of *Say Ciao to Chow Mein: Conquering Career Burnout* and other books for lawyers. To learn more visit his Web site, www.cordellparvin.com or contact him at cparvin@cordellparvin.com.