



Canadian youth empowerment activist Craig Kielburger on treating adults as ‘big young people’

Can you remember your first speaking engagement?

I was 12 years old and shaking in front of my class, holding an article about child labour while I asked them to fight this injustice. I never thought it would become an international charity, a partnership with Oprah’s Angel Network and a social enterprise with clothing, publishing and travel divisions.

What’s the worst thing that has happened to you during an event?

Once, in India, a stampeding elephant charged the crowd. Now, nothing fazes me.

What was the last event you spoke at?

An Investors Group event about corporate social responsibility and finding messages to celebrate even during the financial crisis.

Which event has been your favourite and why?

Did I mention the stampeding elephant?

If you could speak at any event, past or future, what would it be?

Probably at Martin Luther King Jr’s ‘I Have a Dream’ speech – not to speak, just to listen.

Which speaker/performer do you most admire and why?

Former-president Bill Clinton’s message is so powerful. Thank goodness I’ve always spoken before him and not after.

What is your worst on-stage habit?

Standing too close to the edge. I like being close to the audience. Once though, the stage broke. Then, I got too close.

What annoys you most professionally?

I’ve never enjoyed pre-packaged scripts. I like every speech to be unique and tailored. It makes the experience more personable.

Do you have any riders or special requirements?

Tech set-up – our speeches use lots of visuals and music. This keeps young people’s attention. Let’s face it, adults are just big young people.

Why should an organiser hire you to speak at their event?

More than ever, people need inspiration. That’s why we try to empower our audiences with the story of one person making a difference. Through sharing stories, best practices on corporate social responsibility and families raising socially-responsible children, we try to demonstrate that an individual can build strong families, workplaces and communities by celebrating what’s good in the world. It’s just a matter of finding your gift, engaging in your passion and uniting together to support a common mission.

Personal file

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