Executive speech

Keynote opening for a regional manufacturing association · Reading copy, about two minutes

Good morning.

Twenty-two years ago I ruined four thousand dollars of glass before lunch.

I was nineteen. It was my second week. The cut list said forty-eight inches, and the opening was forty-six. Nobody yelled. My foreman walked me out to the truck, handed me a tape measure, and drove me to the job site.

He said, measure it yourself.

So I did. Forty-six inches. Then he said the thing I have repeated to every person I have hired since.

The paper is somebody's opinion. The opening is the truth.

[pause]

I have been thinking about that sentence this year, because our industry is filling up with paper. Dashboards. Forecasts. Reports that tell us what our plants did last month, in more detail than any of us can read.

And most of it is useful. I am not here to tell you to throw it away.

I am here to ask how many of us still walk out to the truck.

How many of us take the new hire to the job site? How many of us stand at the line long enough to see what the report left out?

[pause]

This morning I want to tell you about three openings we measured wrong at my company, what each one cost us, and what we changed.

None of it required new software.

All of it required someone to go and look.