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Carter '87 Combines Theatre, Business Skills as Mind-Blowing Mentalist

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Using the power of illusion and psychological techniques, mentalist Christopher Carter '87 knows how to capture the attention of a crowd, even giving the impression that he can read minds.

But those skills didn't always come naturally, he said.

As a teenager, Carter discovered a passion for magic illusion with a mind-reading flair. He attended Illinois Wesleyan University to study both theatre and business, and that's where

the idea to turn his talent into a unique career began to materialize.

"I always knew I wanted to be performing, I just didn't have the courage to do it," he said. "Being a theatre student introduced me to principles of performance and made me comfortable with the idea that this is something I could do. My time at Illinois Wesleyan helped a great deal in developing this career."

Equipped with his theatre and business knowledge from IWU, Carter studied theatre history and criticism at the University of Michigan before [starting his own business as a mentalist performer based in Chicago](#). He now entertains crowds on college campuses, at awards banquets and at corporate presentations.

While on stage, Carter wows the audience by combining magic tricks, hypnosis and the power of suggestion to make it appear like he is reading minds of those in the crowd. He selects an audience member and determines the name of their first crush, and even duct tapes his eyes shut before describing an object hidden in someone's pocket.

During corporate events, Carter said his performance provides more than just mystical entertainment to executives. He shares non-verbal communication tips and persuasive techniques that can be put to use in the business world, all with a humorous tone.



Christopher Carter '87 has created a mentalist career using his knowledge of non-verbal communication and magical illusion, along with theatre and business skills he gained at Illinois Wesleyan.



Christopher Carter '87 has been returning to IWU for more than 20 years to present his mentalist show to students at the start of the semester. In this photo from 2005, he makes predictions from the stage at Hansen Student Center with duct tape over his eyes.

"Skills of the stage are just applied communication skills," he said. "People in business need these skills, to control a conversation or control a stage if they're presenting."

[For more than 20 years](#), Carter has returned to his alma mater to perform for Illinois Wesleyan students. On Wednesday, Aug. 23, new and transfer students enjoyed Carter's show as part of the Turning Titan back-to-school celebration, hosted by the Campus Activities Board.

"Chris's performance was mind-blowing," said CAB director, Laina Chavarria '25. "Even his warm up was very impressive. His skill of reading people's mannerisms is incredible and something I wish I could do. Overall, his performance was one of a kind and left me amazed."

That's exactly the reaction Carter likes to see.

"I hope students feel a sense of absolutely mind-numbing astonishment," he said. "I want them to be freaked out. I do think it's good to encounter things we don't understand on a regular basis."

Beyond the exciting show, Carter hopes IWU students might gain some inspiration from his atypical career choice.

"There is very little you can imagine for a career path that you cannot succeed at, provided you approach it as an entrepreneur. Those skills are definitely something you can pick up at Illinois Wesleyan, but you have to think broadly," said Carter.

By Julia Perez