

# Speaker Ideas

Sharing the power of ideas

*guest speakers for conferences and events*



**Cathy O'Dowd** is the first woman in the world to climb Mount Everest, the world's highest mountain, from both its north and south sides.

The years she spent on or around Everest were for her a degree 'in living'. The insights she discovered about herself, and about individuals and teams under intense stress in the face of overwhelming challenge, are ones she has been sharing with her corporate audiences ever since. She has been a professional speaker for ten years and has presented her message to companies in 33 countries on six continents.

Cathy remains an active adventurer. In 2003 she made a bold but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to climb a new route on the notorious east face of Everest. In spring of 2004 she took a dog-sled expedition through the remote wilderness of the Norwegian Arctic to the northern-most point of Europe. In summer of 2005 she tackled the sheer rock walls of Yosemite National Park, in the summer of 2006 she explored the granite alpine peaks of Switzerland and California's Sierra Nevada.

Cathy O'Dowd, who grew up in Johannesburg, South Africa, has climbed ever since leaving school. She was completing her Masters degree in Media Studies at Rhodes University, and working as university lecturer, when she saw an advert in a newspaper for a place on the 1st South African Everest Expedition. She was one of 200 women who applied for the Everest place, and was the one finally selected. The team followed the route made famous by Edmund Hillary. Despite being the apprentice on the team, on 25 May 1996 Cathy O'Dowd reached the summit. It was, however, a tough introduction, as British team-mate Bruce Herrod was killed on the descent.

In 1998 she took on the challenge of the treacherous north side of Everest, where George Mallory had famously disappeared in 1924. Her attempt ended just hours below the summit when she stopped to try and save a dying American woman. In 1999 she returned once more, and succeeded, becoming the first woman in the world to climb Everest from both north and south sides.

Cathy O'Dowd has written two books about her Everest experiences, *Everest: Free To Decide*, co-written with Ian Woodall, and *Just for the love of it*, translated into German as *Aus Liebe Zum Berg*. In 2000 she became only the fourth woman in the world to climb Lhotse, the world's fourth highest mountain.

Cathy O'Dowd is currently living in Andorra, in the Pyrenees mountains, while she pursues her speaking career, and explores the mountains of Europe.

## Sample topics:

- Achieving peak performance
- Teamwork
- Risk management

## Speaker Ideas

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