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Keynote speakers are generally subject matter experts or very experienced in their field. Passing on the benefit of this experience can only be beneficial to the rest of society.

# John Burness

Inspiring Leadership in the Global Business Arena

In the professional landscape, keynote speakers and business coaches hold great importance. They contribute with their expertise and experience, inspiring and motivating individuals through their stories of success and resilience. A notable example is **John Burness, Founder of Axiom Two Ltd**, who employs various strategies

in his speaking to inspire and encourage his audience. As a strong and impactful speaker, John embraces authenticity, vulnerability and draws from his personal experiences to connect with his listeners. His speeches are enriched with genuine insights and relatable stories, making him a compelling and influential communicator.

**From Corporate Sales to Entrepreneurial Mentorship**  
After a successful period in sales at a corporate tech organization, John, along with some partners, embarked on a new journey by starting a business. They initially operated the startup from the front room of a house, employing the 'bootstrapping' approach to gradually grow the company



into a sizable independent software business. Throughout his career, John had felt a strong calling to run his own company, and starting this venture seemed like the best and least risky way to fulfill that ambition.

John's management style was characterized by coaching and mentoring rather than issuing direct orders. This approach proved effective in fostering a collaborative and supportive work environment within the company. As John gained more experience as an entrepreneur, his expertise caught the attention of others, leading to invitations to join the boards of other companies.

This involvement in different company boards expanded John's scope as he found himself coaching and mentoring not only entrepreneurs and executives in his own company but also those in other organizations. His passion for guiding and nurturing talent extended beyond his own business,

and he became a valuable resource for many aspiring and established entrepreneurs alike.

#### **A Tale of Bootstrapping, Mergers, and Success**

John's original software business was "bootstrapped" in the UK, meaning he built it without borrowing money. The strategy relied on organic growth through the establishment of a sales operation, primarily targeting corporate users with products that generated ongoing revenue streams. To expand the business, John merged software products into the company and acquired struggling software companies while reorganizing the equity structure.

After a while, he decided to step back from the business to focus on adventure expeditions but returned after a number of years when he realized the company was facing difficulties. Taking charge, he bought out all the other shareholders and

successfully turned the business around, eventually selling it to a European supplier of software solutions.

#### **Inspiring Through Experience**

John employs various strategies in his speaking to inspire and encourage his audiences effectively. He understands the importance of a strong beginning to captivate the person's interest from the outset. Demonstrating empathy, John shares his personal business journey, allowing others to either relate to or aspire towards similar goals, fostering a sense of camaraderie.

John emphasizes authenticity in his speeches, drawing from his firsthand experiences as an entrepreneur who has traversed the entire spectrum from start-up to international business owner and manager. This genuineness resonates with others. Utilizing self-deprecating humor, he infuses his talks with inspiration and levity, which helps create a positive and approachable atmosphere.

John employs metaphors and recounts stories from his extensive business career and his involvement in various extreme outdoor expeditions. These are relatable and serve as powerful examples.

Recognizing the importance of active engagement, John actively listens to the people around him and incorporates their perspectives, ensuring that the speech becomes an interactive and immersive

experience where the audience feels heard and involved.

#### **Key Qualities of an Impactful Public Speaker**

John believes that a truly encouraging and impactful public speaker possesses a range of key qualities and skills. Amongst those already mentioned, such as empathy, authenticity, humor, storytelling, and active listening, John also identifies several other essential traits that contribute to effective public speaking:

- **Passion:** A successful public speaker must exhibit genuine enthusiasm and passion for their topic. This fervour helps engage the audience and conveys the speaker's commitment to the subject matter.
- **Simplicity:** John recognizes the importance of clear and concise communication. A skilled public speaker can convey complex ideas in a straightforward manner, ensuring that the audience grasps and retains the main points.
- **Humility:** Despite being an expert in the subject, a public speaker should avoid coming across as arrogant. Demonstrating humility allows the audience to feel more at ease and fosters a sense of connection between the speaker and listeners.
- **Adaptability:** John understands that maintaining audience interest is paramount. A proficient public speaker

must be prepared to adjust their presentation on the fly if needed, veering away from the planned talk to address the audience's interests or concerns.

In John's view, all these qualities, play a crucial role in making a public speaker truly encouraging and impactful.

#### **A Global Business Enthusiast and Investor**

John Burness's work revolves around engaging with a wide array of business professionals across various industries and regions around the globe. This extensive

network allows him to stay updated on the latest trends. Additionally, he participates in international peer-to-peer learning groups to further enrich his knowledge.

As an investor, John regularly interacts with a diverse range of companies, spanning from promising startups to pre-IPO ventures. His passion for staying informed is evident through his avid reading and continuous tracking of current affairs.

Furthermore, John embraces travel both for business and leisure, taking every opportunity to explore new places and gain valuable experiences.

#### **Forging Authentic Connections**

In his speeches, John employs specific strategies and techniques to establish a connection with his audience. One of his key approaches involves showing vulnerability, which he believes fosters a deeper bond with the listeners. By creating an atmosphere of empathy and shared purpose, John aims to resonate with the audience on a more profound level.

He emphasizes the importance of authenticity in this process and often exemplifies it by sharing personal stories drawn from his own life experiences.

Through these genuine narratives, John forges a strong and authentic connection with his listeners.

#### **Empowering Advice for Aspiring Speakers**

John offers valuable advice to aspiring speakers who wish to create a positive impact. He emphasizes that it is crucial for speakers to remain true to themselves and not attempt to adopt a persona on stage. He firmly believes that trying to 'play a role' is more suited for actors, not speakers, and warns that the audience will quickly recognize any insincerity.



**John Burness**  
Founder,  
Axiom Two Ltd

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Showing vulnerability generally allows you to connect with the audience on a deeper level, particularly when you have built empathy and common purpose.



John advises aspiring speakers not to succumb to fear, as he assures them that every person in the audience genuinely wants them to succeed. Encouragement and support await those who take the stage.

Another essential aspect John highlights is the necessity to be well-versed in the subject matter they intend to address. He reminds speakers that they may face challenges or questions from the audience, so having a solid understanding of the topic is essential.

For those new to public speaking, John stresses the significance of continuous practice. He firmly believes that practice is key to

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My work involves engaging with a huge variety of business people in many different industries and parts of the world.”

honing one's skills and becoming a confident speaker.

John also encourages aspiring speakers to take pride in being asked to present. He emphasizes that being invited to speak is a significant compliment, as it reflects the recognition of their expertise and value in sharing their insights.

By following this advice, John believes that aspiring speakers can make a genuine and positive impact on their audiences, fostering a memorable and impactful speaking experience.

#### Undertaking Diverse Ventures for a Supportive Society

In John's opinion, keynote speakers play a crucial role in contributing to the creation of a more encouraging and supportive

society. John believes that keynote speakers, often being subject matter experts or individuals with extensive experience in their respective fields, possess valuable insights and knowledge. By sharing this expertise with others, they positively impact society as a whole.

Regarding his own projects and initiatives aligning with his mission as a business manager, coach, and mentor, John is involved in various ventures. As an investor, he provides support to a diverse range of companies. Additionally, he takes on the role of a non-executive Chairman for two independent businesses. As a coach, he dedicates his time to guiding and mentoring numerous executives and leadership teams. He also runs workshops based on

his POLAR process that teaches entrepreneurs "how to survive and thrive in business.". Moreover, John extends his services pro bono to certain smaller businesses that have a socially beneficial offering.

As a founder, John is also actively engaged in a technology-based business centred around facial recognition technology. The venture originated during the Covid pandemic with products focused on temperature monitoring. However, it has since expanded to encompass more general applications, leveraging the latest technological offerings.

#### Expert Tips and Encouragement for Success

When asked about handling nerves or stage fright before delivering a speech John offers some insightful tips on managing these feelings. He believes that experiencing some level of nervousness before speaking in front of an audience is natural and indicates that one cares about their performance. To tackle these nerves, John advises arriving at the venue early to ensure everything is prepared and functioning correctly, as technical glitches can add to the stress. He emphasizes taking responsibility for the smooth running of the event rather than relying solely on the hosts.

In terms of preparation, John recommends allowing ample time for getting ready, considering that people may approach and

engage in conversation before the speech. He suggests finding a private space where one can warm up their voice, even singing a song, to ensure a strong and confident delivery.

When stepping on stage, John emphasizes projecting confidence and presence, creating a short pause before speaking to grab the audience's attention. He highlights the importance of making a strong initial impact, as people often form their impressions within the first 90 seconds of a speech.

Reflecting on the power of encouragement and motivation in his work, John shares an anecdote about start-up entrepreneurs and the challenges they face. He believes that many entrepreneurs underestimate the difficulties of building a business and may need to be adequately prepared for the often bleak and lonely times they encounter. John's advice to such individuals is simple yet impactful: 'Don't give up.'

He has found that these three words, coming from someone they respect, can be immensely encouraging and motivational during tough times. John emphasizes that giving up too soon or too easily is often the primary reason for business failures. He extends this advice to larger companies as well, stating that no matter the size, all companies go through difficult phases, but perseverance can lead to finding solutions and overcoming obstacles.

