

A TALENT FOR MOTIVATION

Whether it's discussing the latest sales techniques, bringing a team together with renewed focus and drive, or changing the work patterns of managers, Terry Hawkins' audiences walk away with a new sense of purpose – in life, not just work. *Human Capital* asked her about her experiences as a trainer and presenter

Most business professionals have had experiences with 'life changing' experts at seminars and industry functions, but no doubt the majority of these experiences have been less than life-changing. With over 20 years of experience as a trainer and presenter, Terry Hawkins will come as a revelation. Her presentation style and gift for connecting with audiences from all walks of life, from school students to hardened truck drivers, ensures she will engage with her audience and challenge the way they think. Ask her what her area of specialty is and she replies simply, "people".

HC: Tell me about your background. Why did you set up your training company People in Progress?

TH: I started People in Progress back in 1988 after I'd been working as a corporate trainer for seven years. The company I was working for at the time went into receivership, so I decided to break away and try my own thing. People think that success is always something carefully planned, but this was totally unplanned!

I was unemployed, had no money and no idea of how to start up a business. I ended up putting all of my influences together with my own take on things and wrote a sales training program based on the end-user – the customer. I then went

door knocking. I literally started from scratch because I didn't know anyone. I didn't have a network of contacts to draw from as I was new to Sydney. So I opened the Yellow Pages and started calling!

HC: What sort of training did you focus on?

TH: I initially did sales training, but because I was exposed to personal growth training with a Japanese training company I had worked for, I integrated the two and never told anyone, of course. This was the 1980s and personal growth was just poking its nose out of the closet! So people would come in to do sales training and would go out with that and personal growth. I have always believed if you fix the human being, then the work being will benefit as well. It worked and the results were amazing!

HC: Should training be an ongoing mission for every organisation?

TH: It's like health. It's something you only notice when you haven't got it. It takes about two years to see a noticeable difference in the culture of a business after initiating a solid training program, and it takes less than two years to kill it.

So you can spend decades building a culture and it can take as little as 12 months for it to slip away. I think we can be too quick to change things sometimes

without stopping to consider what we might actually be losing. I also think if you don't train your staff you've got rocks in your head.

Every day, I see thousands of dollars go down the drain because of untrained staff, especially front-line staff. For some strange reason, some people think that we should come to the job with the skills – they see it as being personality-driven rather than skills-driven. That's why at People in Progress we aim to help companies develop a self-sustaining system that supports all levels of their business.

HC: From there you have taken up keynote speaking. Can you explain the sorts of things you cover in your presentations?

TH: Anything to do with people skills really! My background covers almost every aspect of the people side of a business and I have developed programs in all of these areas, so my keynote presentations are really the highlights of the key areas.

I might speak on performance enhancement, values training, sales, customer service, team building, management and leadership – the list goes on. That's why I love having the background that I have. I've worked with some amazing clients and companies over the years, and now I have this huge resource of material and experiences that I can draw from.

HC: You are renowned for two characters called Stickman and Pitman who sum up your philosophy. Can you explain about them?

TH: It amazes me how people from every sphere have just warmed to these two lovable characters. The concept really isn't that new, but then at the same time the delivery and 'packaging' are! It's the old positive/negative with a bit of scientific proof thrown in for the sceptics! I've turned it into two characters that live inside of our head. One of them is a villain and one is a superhero. Negative people – pit people – always put the blame outside of themselves, so they'll blame the environment or blame their past, and it doesn't empower them to move forward. So, this particular presentation is what I've learnt in 25 years put into a simplistic way, but in 90 minutes people will have a formula that can absolutely change the way they do their life if they want. That's why it's become so powerful.

I think that may be why some people think I'm a lifestyle presenter, because people saw how powerful it was in their life. It's actually 90 minutes out of one of my three-day sales and communications training programs. I came up with these two concepts because I saw distinct differences in people. You could have two people who have had similar experiences during their life, similar training, support, etc, and one would fly and one would fizzle. I wanted to find out why, and more importantly, *how* could we change it. I ended up having to write a book, *There Are Two Times In Life, NOW & TOO LATE!* [published by Melissa Messenger, Messenger Marketing] because people kept wanting to know more about these characters. It really is incredible.

HC: Can your presentations be tailored to suit your audience?

TH: Yes, completely – they are so universal. In one week, I can speak to insurance people, financial planners, university graduates, travel agents, truck drivers, doctors, mortgage brokers, managers, teenagers at a retreat, real estate people, CEO groups, and fashion

people. I don't want to be only known for Pitman and Stickman, though, because my background and knowledge cover a much broader range, yet whenever I look at a commonality between all of these areas, Pitman and Stickman distinguish the successful and unsuccessful. Who doesn't succeed as a manager? It's the pit manager! Who doesn't succeed as a salesperson? Pit salespeople. I think that's why people get it – they are two concepts that instantly everyone can relate to.

HC: What do you aim to achieve through your presentations?

TH: As a speaker, my whole aim is to take audiences on a journey, so they can be on the edge of their seats with one emotion, and then *boom!* in two seconds they can be in a totally different emotional state. I want them to walk away saying, "I've just given up 90 minutes of my life to listen to this woman and it's been the most valuable 90 minutes I've had in a long time."

The amazing thing about Pitman and Stickman is that I hear stories years later from people. I'm writing another book called *Stickman Stories* because we have received so many from past audience members.

HC: It must be hard to come up with a fresh twist on motivational seminars – what makes you different from everyone else out there?

TH: Laughter and great content. There are people who can tell a great story and people who can make you laugh, but it's very difficult to do both at the same time. That's what we aim to do with People in Progress as well. We don't do it just because it's all showmanship; we do it because when people are laughing and having a good time they relax, and when they're in a relaxed state, learning and retention is about 75% greater. I also aim to live out our philosophy, which is to make a powerful and positive difference in the human condition. I work really hard at delivering on the day – I want people to want more, and isn't that what it's all about? **HC**



Terry Hawkins will be presenting at the HR Summit 07, 28–29 March 2007, at the Hilton Hotel, Sydney. To register for the event go to www.thehrsummit.com

**Main Conference
29 March, 9.10am–10.40am
Career development and training**

- Learn how to design successful career management strategies to engage and retain your top talent
- Discover new training and development techniques designed to increase your company's performance
- Learn how to equip your employees with the necessary tools utilising cost-effective strategies

**Directors Forum
29 March, 11.30am–1.00pm
Managing the managers**

- Improve organisational results by using effective measures to appraise line managers' performance
- Discover new opportunities to communicate the outcomes of performance results as a basis for remuneration, development, retention or removal of managers
- Identify the right executive development plan to address poor performance