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From theatre director to the corporate world – business lessons from the stage

By Dr. Diana Theodores, author and Director of Theatre 4 Business



"If you want to be successful in business, think theatre."

Charles Handy

Great performances make me want to jump from my seat and applaud. They make me feel more awake, more passionate, more motivated, more courageous - they make me feel *more* in every way.

For 25 years I worked in the world of theatre. I have researched and analysed the lessons of great performance and applied these lessons from theatre to the world of business. The challenges of business - vision, innovation, powerful communication, energy, risk taking, and delivery - is the business of theatre.

The world of theatre offers elegant and critical lessons for business leaders, teams and organisations for radically improving performance

Connecting to your authentic voice

My son recently rewatched *The King's Speech*. He told me "I realized this entire movie is a testament to your coaching work!" Lionel (Geoffrey Rush, incredible performance), who helps the king, isn't a doctor. He has developed a set of highly effective skills and beliefs from theatre/dramatics/acting that people can connect to their own authentic voice and need not be afraid and to "break out" of traditional ways of thinking, and limiting beliefs and habits.

The power of theatre connects body, belief, voice, confidence and courage in the performance! Whether you're a king or an executive leader, theatre can help you perform at your best.

Communication is key

Great performers want to be with their audience and make something happen, something of value and meaning. They connect to their words with their voice, body, belief, energy and commitment - they care about communicating.

When you care about communication in the way a performer would, great things can happen:

- You connect with your customers and build relationships more effectively
- Your team will feel motivated and empowered
- Talented people in the organisation's pipeline raise their visibility
- You climb out of your default zone and recharge your presentations when they've become "stale, flat and unprofitable."
- You can go off script and think on your feet with flair
- You and your team can unlock more creativity, recharge the vision and reinvest in the messages.
- You and all your stakeholders are seen, heard and valued and can play your fullest part in the bigger story of your organisation.

Great communication is a gift of clarity, understanding and enabling. When we are fully present and receptive we connect to ourselves and to others with humanity and creativity. Communicating as you would in the theatre empowers you to be at your best as a leader, team player and human being who makes a difference.

Business lessons from the theatre

My 25 years as a business and theatre performance coach have taught me the following lessons:

1. Communication is courageous

When you are seen and heard as a clear, compelling, effective communicator you can make great things happen.

2. Great communication requires fitness

It's your job to inspire and move others and to communicate your message persuasively. Communication is not a soft skill! It requires *fitness and practice* - setting clear intentions for the results you want to achieve; creating a positive mental frame; tuning in to your environment and your audience, being energised in your voice and body language, releasing excess tension; being clear; radiating confidence and enthusiasm.

3. Inspiration is insightful

Great performances on the world stage inspire us to feel, think and be more. When we dare to step into our bigger self we amplify our vision and our sense of purpose. This inspires others - from our colleagues to our clients.

4. Your story is your power

When you think of any compelling speaker, you think of someone who can really tell a story to engage an audience and relate that to solid content. One of the best ways to bring people with you is through storytelling. When we are told a story, we engage much more of ourselves than we do when presented with mere facts. Our emotions are triggered, associations are stimulated and memories are activated. Whatever your message is, it is also a story. Getting your story right is the most effective preparation you can invest in.

5. Creativity is confidence

When you connect to your creativity you are harnessing your unique energy and life force. If you're alive, you're creative! Re-awaken those passions that have gone dormant. Don't throw any of yourself away. The more in touch with your creativity you are the more agile, flexible and adaptable you are.

6. Rehearsal is profit

All great performers rehearse. The better your performance the more influence and buy-in you attract. The result is increased profitability for you and your company.

7. Feedback Grows Performance

Feedback is like an audience to a performer. You need it. How to give it, how to receive it and what to do with it is a vital interactive process and key to positive change and growth.

8. Your First Audience is Yourself



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Making an impact on yourself is as important as making an impact on others. In fact it begins with you. Pull back your safety curtain, step centre stage, enjoy the warmth of the spotlight and start bringing your personal performance to life.

If all the world's a stage (to quote Shakespeare), then the greatest role you'll ever get to perform is YOU.

Dr. Diana Theodore is Director of Theatre 4 Business and an international performance coach Her new book *Performing As You: How to have authentic impact in every role you play* is out now.

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