Ozan Varol

Rocket Scientist, Professor, and Author, Think Like a Rocket Scientist

How to Think Like a Rocket Scientist. Rocket science is often celebrated as the ultimate triumph of technology. But it's not. Rather, it's the apex of a certain thought process—a way to imagine the unimaginable and solve the unsolvable. It's the same thought process that enabled Neil Armstrong to take his giant leap for mankind, that allows spacecraft to travel millions of miles through outer space and land on a precise spot, and that brings us closer to colonizing other planets.

Today, thinking like a rocket scientist is a necessity. We all encounter complex and unfamiliar problems in our lives. Those who can tackle these problems— without clear guidelines and with the clock ticking—enjoy an extraordinary advantage.

In this keynote, Ozan will reveal nine simple strategies from rocket science that you can use to make your own giant leaps. You'll learn:

- The single principle Elon Musk used to revolutionize the aerospace industry (and how you can use the same principle to transform your business)
- What sets apart top performers when it comes to solving complex problems
- How invisible rules constrain your business (and what to do about it)
- How to reframe questions to generate better answers
- What George Costanza and rocket scientists have in common, and what you can learn from both in starting your next project
- How to nail your next product launch using an unstoppable astronaut training strategy

You won't be a rocket scientist by the end of this keynote. But you'll learn how to think like one.

The Power of Contrarian Thinking. We're genetically programmed to follow the herd. Thousands of years ago, conformity to our tribe was essential to our survival. Not anymore. The ability to disrupt established methods and find new ways of looking at old ideas is one of the most sought-after qualifications in all fields. It's a superpower that allows you to see things that others miss.

Yet this super power is becoming increasingly rare. Businesses plant their lightning rod where lightning struck last and wait for it to strike again. This worked once, so let's do it again. And again. And again. Over time, imitation makes the original obsolete.

This keynote focuses on the power of contrarian thinking—the ability to question and redefine conventional wisdom to generate breakthrough innovation. I'll reveal:

- How to implement first-principles thinking to question outdated assumptions that are holding you back.
- The one simple question that created a transformative marketing campaign and revolutionized an Olympic event (and how you can use the same question to transform your business)
- A 2-step process for squashing fear of uncertainty and failure
- The secrets that the world's elite companies use to not only endure market shifts and global changes, but leverage them to their advantage.
- How to use a simple technique called combinatory play to redefine the rules of the game.

When you learn how to reimagine the status quo, you won't just change the way you view the world. You'll be empowered to change the world itself.

Think Different: The Power of Cognitive Diversity. Many businesses strive to promote a diverse and inclusive workplace. But an often-overlooked aspect of the issue is cognitive diversity—which is based on differences in viewpoint or perspective. According to cutting-edge research, cognitive diversity can promote problem-solving and increase innovation by bringing a wide variety of perspectives to the table.

Most businesses stifle cognitive diversity. As a result, groupthink and conformity pop up even in institutions whose lifeblood is creativity. Employees hide their best selves rather than go against the grain.

In this keynote, Ozan will share a lively, anecdote-filled roadmap that business leaders can use to promote a thriving corporate culture that harnesses cognitive diversity. You'll learn:

- The two reasons why most modern workplaces stifle cognitive diversity and undermine creativity;
- How conformity led to the biggest disasters in rocket-science history (and what businesses can learn from these disasters);
- Why the best ideas come from great teams, not great individuals; how to harness the power of diversity while maintaining team unity
- How businesses can promote psychological safety where employees feel free to speak up

Why Nothing Succeeds Like Failure. We're wired to fear failure. To ward off the bogeyman of failure, we keep a safe distance from it. We stay off the edges, avoid healthy risks, and play it safe.

This natural tendency to avoid failure is a recipe for failing. Behind every canvas unpainted, every goal unattempted, every business unlaunched, and every book unwritten, is the looming fear of failure.

On his iTunes top 25 business podcast, Famous Failures, Ozan has interviewed titans from all walks of life about the failures they've had in life and in business. In this talk, he'll share this wealth of knowledge and inspiration with the audience. You'll learn:

- Why most of us think about failure the wrong way and how we can redefine our relationship with it.
- Why companies pay lip service to learning from mistakes, but don't follow through in practice.
- What strategies elite institutions use to build failure into their business model and create an environment where employees willingly reveal their mistakes, instead of concealing them.
- Why it can be harder for a business to survive its own success than its failure (and what to do about it).

You'll walk away with science-backed strategies for failing gracefully and creating the right conditions for learning from mistakes.