

Ben Saunders

World Record Polar Explorer Turned Tech CEO, TED Master Storyteller

Leading in Extreme Environments: Lessons from an Arctic Explorer & Tech CEO. In 2004, Ben skied solo from Russia to the North Pole—600 miles across floating Arctic ice. No one has repeated this journey since, largely because the Arctic lost nearly 10 billion tons of ice in the following years. After spending more time in polar regions than many career scientists, Ben now applies this expertise as Founder & CEO of a venture-backed technology company building systems for Arctic operations, serving defense, government, and commercial clients. Drawing on 23 years at the edge of human capability and now leading operations in one of the world's most strategically important regions, Ben delivers unique insights on innovation under constraint, leading in extreme conditions, and the intersection of exploration and emerging technology.

Forge, Don't Fracture: Finding the Grit Within. Stress, exhaustion, and life-or-death decisions—Ben Saunders faced all of this on his record-breaking Antarctic expeditions. As he reveals in this keynote, these challenges mirror what we face in today's high-pressure work environments. Drawing on his experiences in nature's most unforgiving conditions, Saunders examines the line between productive stress and harmful strain. He shares powerful strategies for turning stress into grit, reframing obstacles into opportunities, and channeling courage to focus on what's within your control.

The Importance of Honest Communication. When Ben Saunders looks back on the scariest, hardest, and bravest challenges he and his teammates have faced on daring expeditions to the world's most unforgiving environments, he thinks about how communication has been the key to overcoming the obstacles in front of them. In this talk, Saunders offers business leaders and their people tangible examples for how to remove the barriers to open communication, streamline collaborative effectiveness, and create a culture in which asking for help isn't a sign of weakness, but rather a vital hallmark of a high-performing team.

Being the Only Authority on Your Potential. Ben Saunders takes audiences on a journey from uncertainty, fear, and self-doubt to raising the bar in one of the most demanding fields imaginable. His life gives evidence to the belief that "impossible is just someone else's opinion." Through captivating visuals and raw storytelling, he delivers insights on perseverance and making the best use of the traits and potential we all possess but rarely employ to the fullest. This story of self-belief is fused with practical lessons on getting difficult things done in difficult environments, building teams, preparing meticulously, knowing when to pivot, and fulfilling potential—no matter how steep the odds.