LAI Leading Authorities International

Erik Weihenmayer

World-Class Blind Adventurer, Mount Everest and the Seven Summits

The "No Barriers" Life. Through Erik's ground-breaking adventures around the world, he has explored and defined what it means to live a "No Barriers Life," describing it as a map we build to navigate and to pursue a life that matters. Central to this journey is a mindset to continually challenge ourselves to grow and evolve—in Erik's words, to "climb" while others "camp." Erik describes the key components for shattering barriers and pioneering possibilities, which start with a "reach into the darkness" and a powerful vision to guide us through the storm. It takes building a great "rope team" that shares our vision and makes us stronger and relentlessly innovating new systems and approaches along the way. And it takes the drive to lead and elevate others. As a blind adventurer who has climbed Mt. Everest and kayaked the Grand Canyon, Erik understands better than most that barriers are real, not merely perceived, and that that obstacles encountered can either stop us in our tracks, or we can figure out a way to harness them and propel ourselves to new places that we would never get to in any other way. Erik calls this "alchemy," the process of turning lead into gold. "With an alchemist," he says, "you can throw them in the midst of a fierce competitive environment, strip away their resources, throw roadblocks in front of them, and they'll still find a way to win—not despite adversity, but because of it." Erik will take audiences on a journey to discover the tools and insights to develop what he calls the "No Barriers Mindset"—what it takes for individuals, teams, and organizations to turn into the storm, convert challenges into greatness, and reach for nearly impossible goals.

Shattering Expectations. Erik Weihenmayer inspires audiences to have the vision to dream big, the courage to reach for near impossible goals, and the grit, determination, and ingenuity to transform our lives into something extraordinary. Weihenmayer's daring adventures have shattered people's perceptions all over the world about what is humanly possible. As a blind mountain climber, he has faced one of the most arduous tasks man can attempt, with a unique impediment that turned out to be a special gift. He defines vision as "an internal compass guiding us through the storm," and gives new poignancy to the concept of seeing.

The Only Way To Cross A Glacier Is With A Rope Team. Erik Weihenmayer speaks with authority on the subject of teamwork. His Mt. Everest expedition holds a world record for the most people from one team to stand atop Everest's peak in a single day. The key to pursuing his endeavors has been his superb ability to combine his strengths and talents with those of the people around him. He speaks to the importance of working as a team. "People might have different responsibilities, different goals, even motives, but you link together behind one vision. The scope and power of that kind of team is unstoppable."

On Innovation: How To Pioneer New Possibilities. When Erik Weihenmayer realized he'd have trouble hearing teammates call out the timing for important turns while kayaking, he developed a submersible, open mic radio. When he noticed he would need something to assist him with being aware of an impending landing while paragliding, he designed and built a unique bell-and-rope system. Weinhenmayer doesn't see himself as a risk taker, but as a problem solver and above all, an innovator. He is motivated by a sense of discovery to develop new strategies to make the world, and his adventures within it, safer, more efficient, and more productive. With this talk, he speaks passionately and memorably about finding creative ways to cross the blurry lines between what detractors view as impossible, and what we believe to be possible in our hearts.

Leading In The Dark. Erik Weihenmayer describes the time he and his partner, a much better climber, were caught on a dangerous rock face at nightfall and without working headlamps. In spite of his fear, Weihenmayer knew this was his time to lead his friend down to safety. He believes the most important aspect of leadership is how we pass it on to others. "Leadership is contagious," he says, "We pass it from body to body, from life to life, and we give all the people around us the courage to do great things."