Samuel Ramsey

Pioneering Entomologist; Founder & Executive Director of the Ramsey Research Foundation

The Power of Peculiar Thinking: Problem-Solving Through Creativity and Ingenuity. As a young graduate researcher, Dr. Sammy Ramsey looked at an age-old question: “What’s happening to the honeybees?” through a new lens to make a breakthrough discovery that turned the field of bee research on its head. In this talk, Dr. Ramsey spurs audiences to think outside the box as he shares the story of what led him to connect a family member’s health issues back to his bee research to arrive at a powerful conclusion on the parasitic pandemic plaguing the honeybees. He walks audiences through his process for using peculiar thinking that gets the brain processing ideas in new and unique ways and unlocks new outlets for pushing past stalls in thinking and productivity. The approach Dr. Ramsey shares gives people the freedom to dig deeper into all the ideas that they’re told are “too crazy” and “will never work” as they figure out how to tackle complex problems and innovate with impact.

The Secrets of the Bees: How Nature’s Most Efficient Workforce Would Run a Business. What can one of Earth’s oldest success stories teach us about leadership, innovation, and organizational design? Quite a lot, it turns out. As one of the world’s most influential bee biologists and producer of the award-winning Disney documentary Secrets of the Bees, directed by James Cameron, Dr. Sammy has spent years uncovering the remarkable systems that allow honey bee colonies to thrive. Without executives, meetings, or organizational charts, thousands of individuals coordinate complex tasks, adapt to constant change, solve problems in real time, and make high-stakes decisions with extraordinary efficiency. In this engaging keynote, Dr. Ramsey translates the hidden genius of the hive into practical lessons for modern organizations. Through stunning visuals and groundbreaking videography, audiences discover how bees foster innovation through distributed decision-making, build resilient systems through diversity and feedback, communicate with remarkable precision, and remain adaptable in rapidly changing environments. Blending unforgettable stories from the natural world with insights that apply directly to business, The Secrets of the Bees challenges leaders to rethink how great organizations are built and how nature solved many of today’s management challenges millions of years ago.

Why Your Greatest Advantage May Be the Part of Yourself You've Been Trying to Hide. Some of life’s greatest opportunities begin with a simple misunderstanding: not realizing something is supposed to be impossible. Growing up, Dr. Sammy never followed a conventional path. By refusing to believe there was only one way to think, learn, or succeed, he emerged from the worst public high school in his home state with enough scholarships to fund his undergraduate and graduate education, found himself working at the U.S. Supreme Court at age 19, reached his dream of becoming one of very few black entomologists, discovered what’s killing honey bees, and ultimately

became an endowed professor at the University of Colorado Boulder. In this deeply personal and inspiring Keynote, Dr. Ramsey challenges audiences to rethink the assumptions that quietly limit ambition. Rather than conforming to expectations, he argues that our greatest breakthroughs often come from embracing the very qualities that make us different. Through humor, storytelling, and practical reflection, audiences will discover how they can harness the tools of curiosity, authenticity, and unconventional thinking to innovate and reach extraordinary achievements.

America's Most Unwanted: Why the U.S. Imports So Many Invasive Species and What It Teaches Us About Risk. Every day, ships, planes, and cargo containers move millions of products around the globe. They also move something far less visible: living creatures. Surprisingly, the United States imports far more invasive species than it exports, making it one of the world's largest receivers of biological hitchhikers. Why? In this eye-opening keynote, National Geographic Wayfinder Dr. Sammy explores the hidden pathways that allow insects, pathogens, and other organisms to cross continents and reshape ecosystems threatening agriculture, infrastructure, and food security. Drawing on his laboratory's research into global patterns of biological invasion, he reveals why today's interconnected economy creates an unintended "trade deficit" in invasive species and how understanding these pathways can help us stop the next invasion before it begins. Blending fascinating stories from the front lines of biosecurity and his work with the National Geographic Society with practical lessons in systems thinking, this talk challenges audiences to see global trade, climate resilience, and risk management through an entirely new biological lens.

Why Great Ideas Fail and How Effective Communication Changes Everything. Brilliant discoveries often fail to change the world until someone learns how to communicate them effectively. History is full of remarkable victories that quietly unraveled not because the science failed, but because the story did. From the eradication of the devastating screwworm parasite to groundbreaking discoveries in medicine languished for years before changing the world, one lesson emerges again and again: ideas only create impact when people understand them. Drawing from his experiences as a scientist, educator, communicator, and former employee of the U.S. Supreme Court, Dr. Sammy explores how communication shapes success in government, academia, and industry. He reveals why effective programs lose public support, why transformative research often goes unnoticed, and why brilliant innovations sometimes fail to gain traction. Blending compelling stories with practical strategies, this keynote shows audiences how to communicate with greater clarity, build trust, and ensure their best ideas don't simply exist, they make a difference.

What Cockroaches, Curiosity, and Cognitive Bias Teach Us About Finding the Next Big Idea. Some of history's most transformative ideas came from places no one thought to look. Others remained hidden because they challenged our assumptions about where innovation "should" come from. In this thought-provoking keynote, Dr. Sammy explores how breakthroughs often emerge from the overlooked, the unconventional even the disgusting. Through the remarkable story of the discovery that roaches produce the world's most nutritious milk, he reveals how instinctive reactions like disgust, familiarity, and bias can prevent us from recognizing extraordinary opportunities hiding in

plain sight. Drawing on examples from biology, technology, and his own research, Dr. Ramsey demonstrates how nature has already solved many of humanity's most complex problems if we're willing to look beyond our preconceptions. Audiences will leave with practical strategies for recognizing hidden opportunities, questioning inherited assumptions, and cultivating the curiosity needed to fuel innovation in a rapidly changing world.

Bee Bolder: Embracing Adversity and Achieving Excellence. How did a little boy who was terrified of insects become an innovator in science and the study of insects? And on his remarkable journey, how did he overcome the naysayers who said he wasn't doctoral candidate material and even removed him from the program because he didn't "look the part"? Dr. Sammy Ramsey is no stranger to adversity, but he's never let that stop him from achieving his dreams time and again. Even after paying his own way through an Ivy League education and becoming established in his career, he has continued to encounter hurdles most people will never know. From navigating prejudice and fear as one of the only African American professionals in his field and a member of the LGBTQIA+ community to dealing with his initiative to preserve honeybee health being defunded and rallying the public around the cause, his story is one of determination, resilience, and steadfast belief in a greater purpose. So, while Dr. Ramsey knows adversity, he's better acquainted with perseverance. He reflects on his own journey from underdog to global changemaker to empower audience members to see the honey jar as half full and not let the things that other people say determine what they're capable of doing. His positive perspective will reframe how people process every challenge and setback, and inspire them to embrace obstacles as part of their path to success.

Communicating Under Pressure: The Skill that Ended a Pandemic 300 Years Ago. Effective communication, not force, has always been the decisive factor in large-scale change. During the smallpox pandemic, public health efforts initially failed not because of bad science, but because of poor communication and broken trust. When those failures were corrected, one of humanity's deadliest diseases was eradicated. In today's organizations, leaders face similar challenges: communicating complex information, earning trust under uncertainty, and influencing behavior without appeals to authority. In this talk, Dr. Sammy draws from historical pandemics, modern science communication, and his own experience advising institutions at the highest levels (including his work at the U.S. Supreme Court) to reveal what actually persuades people to listen, understand, and act. Attendees will learn practical strategies for translating complex ideas into clear messages, building credibility with skeptical audiences, and communicating in ways that inspire confidence rather than resistance.

Owning Your Identity. As an African American in science and a queer person actively involved in a faith community that is reluctant to embrace members of the LGBTQIA+ community, Dr. Sammy Ramsey knows what it's like to feel disconnected because of who you are. No matter what groups he has found himself in, he could always count on being too much of some quality perceived as challenging to those groups — be it because of his race, sexual orientation, or some other aspect of his identity. Yet, Dr. Ramsey sees his multi-hyphenate identity as truly a gift. It provides distinct

vantage points from which to see the world and create new pathways to accomplishing your goals. In this talk, Dr. Ramsey demonstrates the ways in which he has owned his identity and leveraged its complexity to view problems differently and achieve success in ways no one could have predicted.