

# Plain SPEAKER

**AUTHOR KEVIN ABDULRAHMAN EXPLAINS THE SECRETS  
BEHIND THE ART OF PUBLIC SPEAKING**

**BY SARA ANABTAWI**

“From the very few things I am good at, this would be it,” says Kevin Abdulrahman, an author, international speaker, and a public speaking coach.

Born in the United Kingdom to a Yemeni father and an Iranian mother, Abdulrahman’s background represents an impressive array of cultures.

Back in 1990, he lived in the United Arab Emirates, but as the Gulf War hit the region,

his family decided to avoid the uncertainties of the time and move to New Zealand.

“They just wanted to go somewhere peaceful and so far away,” he says. “A lot of people at that point of time did not know where New Zealand was.”

Coming from a well-to-do Middle Eastern family, Abdulrahman might have been expected to become a doctor, lawyer, accountant, or even an engineer.

Even though he did plant the seeds to





**Speak your mind** Abdulrahman has been a powerful speaker on various topics, including leadership, inspiration and motivation.

meeting his family's expectations by getting a science degree at the University of Oakland in the US, he ended up entering the business field, eventually moving back to the Middle East.

"I started by becoming successful in numerous businesses," he says. "I was coaching consulting clients, and next thing you know, just by word of mouth, I ended up becoming a powerful speaker."

For over a decade now, Abdulrahman has been a top-rated speaker on various topics, including leadership, inspiration and motivation.

He adds: "I started creating high-performance teams, and really just helped people become the best they can be."

In a nutshell, Abdulrahman believes that

when people find the greatness rooted inside themselves, they can apply it to whatever it is they do.

"It could be their sports, their business, whatever it is, I can make them become better at it," he said.

Abdulrahman has had a lot of requests for public speaking coaching over the years, especially given the current economic downturn.

"The reason for that is a lot of professionals realise that right now, it is a world of noise," he says. "It is a world of competition, and it is a competitive trait to be able to stand out in how you present in public, because that is how people will make a decision about you.

"I always say this: your ability to speak

with impact, to speak to inform, to speak to influence, to speak to inspire, reflects on how people will judge you. It reflects on your image, your people, your group, your brand, your business and your value. It will even reflect on how people will perceive your competence and credibility," he said.

"The saying goes that, within a few seconds, people will make a judgment about you, so within the moment you turn up to speak in public, the question is, are you winning those moments?"

Ninety percent of what Abdulrahman does is corporate coaching. In fact, his clientele base is littered with top-grade professionals.

"[My clients] range from ambassadors, athletes, royalty, presidents to vice presi-

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dents, delegates, managing directors, sales managers and sales account executives,” he says.

He adds: “It is pretty much across every single sector, and the reason is, every group, business, association, or individual as a profession, has some sort of brand value.

“Their ability to speak with impact will reflect on that brand value. So, if they were representing, for example, a Fortune 500 company, they have spent many millions of dollars on flyers, websites, showreels, products, services, knowledge, skill and ability.

“It is all there. There is a huge value for it, but when you go up to a conference, or when you’re giving a presentation to 50, 500 or

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**Sought-after** Abdulrahman has had many requests for public speaking coaching over the years.

5,000 people, [the audience] is not looking at the brand, they are looking at you, and unfortunately, I have seen this many times, within two or three minutes, you ruin all the millions of dollars that you have spent,” he says.

Abdulrahman carries out a lot of public workshops, where anyone is welcome to pay a fee, turn up and be coached. On a deeper angle, he works privately and closely with companies or associations.

“They say: ‘Hey Kevin, Can you come and work with our board members? Can you come and work with our sales team? Or, we have an IPO to launch; can you come and help us with our presentation?’”

Just over a month ago, Abdulrahman worked on a public address with a member of a local royal family by structuring his speech, teaching him how to own the stage, and working on his delivery.

“I flew with him, I shadowed him. I [even] critiqued him while he was giving



**Area of operation** Abdulrahman’s big focus is the Middle East, Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

a presentation...” he says.

High-end one-on-one coaching is what he titles it.

Abdulrahman’s clients are worldwide, come from five continents, and do include the United Arab Emirates. But, due to the sensitivity of the matter, he refrains from naming who he works with, as they approach him in confidence.

“I choose my people,” he says. “I do not [accept every client].”

**90%**

*Percentage of Kevin Abdulrahman’s work that is focused on corporate coaching.*

“For me, it is important my clients have the desire to want to do it, and... the dedication to follow through because it is not just a one stop shop. I help you become great and I can help anyone become great.”

Not every ride is a smooth one; Abdulrahman has had his share of difficult clients — those that do not necessarily see the value of his advice, and instead show a lack of commitment to the art of public speaking.

“My most challenging client was a CEO.



## I AM A KING OF FAILURE. IT IS FANTASTIC AND I AM PROUD TO ACTUALLY SAY IT

Unfortunately, there are some professionals, because they are very good at what they do, they make a fatal assumption and think that it automatically makes them a good speaker," he says.

This particular client was the CEO of a large organisation based in the US. Abdulrahman got a call from his office, as the human resources manager knew of his work, and was asked to fly in and work with the official on a public address set to take place before 500 people.

"I turn out there and he does not want to do anything, which made it difficult, but after a couple of hours and a nice lunch, a bit of chitchat, we ended up working. But, it was difficult because the desire was not there."

Abdulrahman charges a significant amount for his sessions, but because his programmes are tailor-made, he refuses to give an exact price. "With some people, I work on confidence building — what I call the inner game — and with others, I work on the outer game, which is their presentation skills, how to use their hands, how to use their face and their voice," he says.

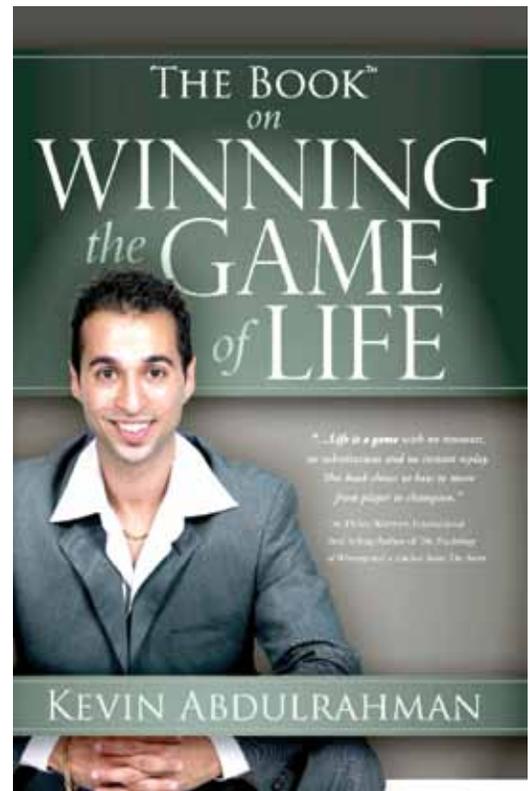
"With some [clients], it could be a two-to-three-day session. With others, it could be a [year-long] contract."

Despite both his position as a passionate advocate of success and his lengthy climb up the career ladder, Abdulrahman has still seen personal failure.

"I am a king of failure. It is fantastic and I am proud to actually say it," he says.

"I tell people I fail on a day-to-day basis. When I work with clients, when it comes to public speaking, I tell them you will become great by constantly failing, but unless you get out there and you push yourself and fail, it is not going to happen. We fail on stage, we fail in our boardroom, we fail in businesses and I have done all of that," he adds.

He gives an example of a CEO of a publicly traded company who had been in his position for over nine months, during which time which he had never delivered a speech. "He did not go up to events. He would [maybe] send his marketing guy... and he would purposefully schedule holidays just to show his executive assistant [that he is booked]."



**Motivation** Abdulrahman has published a number of inspiring books such as 'The Book on Winning the Game of Life.'

"Finally, we sat down, and he said, '...I have just realised that I pushed it to the limit. My people expect me to speak.'

"If you are a CEO of a publicly traded company, your shareholders, your audience, they expect something from you. It is not a task to give to someone else. But, unfortunately, he had the fear of '...what if I forget what I have to say, what if I look bad, how is it going to affect me?'"

With four dense sessions, his client is now a changed man who looks forward to being exposed and networked.

Abdulrahman speaks from experience. He insists that the worst thing that could happen is gaining a reputation as a boring speaker. As a result, one of his key pieces of advice is: "You've got to learn how to own your crowd."

Currently, Abdulrahman's big focus is the Middle East, Asia and the Indian subcontinent, as his work keeps him busy in the region. However, he still occasionally goes back to locations such as Australia, New Zealand and the US.

As an author, Abdulrahman has written a series of books, including 'The Book on What Ever You're Into', in which he aspires to help individuals become winners of their own world.