

# Wow! What A Day!

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Colin C. Edwards reports

It was a summer Saturday in London. This meant the capital was once again grid locked with buses and coaches from Marble Arch, along Park Lane; to Victoria as yet another protest march did its thing. Even so, around 250 life coaches found their way through the congestion to celebrate the Academy's Third Birthday in the superb surroundings of Hotel Inter-Continental.

We were there to enjoy a day packed with information, entertainment and inspiration from some of the country's top speakers - plus one from Australia to add an international flavour to proceedings. Then, in the evening, it was party time with a great dinner, live music and cabaret. This report is for those of you who could not make it, and a happy reminder for those who did.

First speaker of the day was Richard Wilkins who might be Britain's most original presenter. In his gentle Northampton accent, he drew heavily on real life anecdotes as he spoke with a warmth and sincerity that soon had the audience laughing along with him. Richard outlined his early success as a multi-millionaire property developer and his overnight fall to rock bottom.

With a very basic education, Richard reinvented himself as Britain's most successful self published author and, in his own words, 'went from millionaire to happy person'. Now he addresses major international audiences with a message of motivation and hope. There is a simple theme on offer, and one that every life coach should, indeed must, take on board.

Richard's philosophy is easy to write but can be difficult to do. It is that too many of us put off enjoying the fullness of life by



Christine McDougall



delaying things 'until we get there'. We say we will, but only when ....! We do not realise that we are already there. Now, today, this is the 'there' that we spoke about weeks, months or years ago. Make yourself a

notice now and put it over your desk. It will not take long. It has just two words. I'm There!

Our next presenter had stepped in as a replacement at very short notice. Nigel Risner is an experienced motivational speaker who describes himself as 'Europe's only irritational speaker' with the mission of turning limited people limitless.

Following the model that has proved so successful in the USA, Nigel quickly had the audience on their feet and interacting with others who, until a few moments before, had been total strangers. Soon the chandeliers were rattling as he stepped up the excitement factor yet another notch.

The fun and games were to make sure that we were in the room in mind as well as body and that we would focus on the point that PMA is not enough. To succeed in anything we have to come off the fence, we have to focus, and we have to act. Nigel suggested that we are always doing one of two things, we are either coaching ourselves and others towards success, or, we become life's commentators, talking towards failure.

This session closed with drama as Nigel broke an arrow pointed against the throat of a volunteer from the audience. He suggested that we recall the word NUT that, in this instance stands for Nurture Unconscious Talent. Nigel had obviously done this himself with his talents for showmanship and entertainment.

The first session after lunch is known in the public speaking business as the graveyard shift and it takes an exceptional talent to restore the mood and return people to a receptive and upbeat state of mind. We had already met Roy Sheppard as he was linkman for the morning's events. With his background as a former TV presenter, he rose to the occasion magnificently for his own presentation.

Unlike some speakers who work the circuit with a 'one size fits all' choice of standard talks, Roy put himself and the audience on the line. He invited us to nominate the things that keep coaches awake at night regarding practice development and business creation. A dozen or so suggestions came from the floor and a show of hands revealed two outright winners - getting started and attracting new business.

Roy's amazing talent as a gifted and natural communicator ensured that he held our attention as he covered both topics in detail. He asked how we think that people remember us and suggested creating a unique and happy difference that would ensure recall - without becoming totally eccentric. His own gimmick is that he always wears a dress/frock coat when presenting. It provides an immediate topic of conversation and he is remembered.

Roy expanded on the power of networking and the importance of discovering what triggers a potential client's mental decision to buy from you. He described how to gain and use testimonials effectively because people pay more attention to what others say, rather than what you say about yourself.

This highly practical session closed with a couple of questions from Roy. Do you charge what you think you are worth or according to your value to a client? Do you brighten a room when you enter it, or when you leave it? Ask yourself both of these now, answer truthfully and make any necessary changes.



John & Bernadette Cassidy-Rice



Jonathan Jay & Jo Morrison

The final speaker of the day was proof positive of the international appeal of coaching. Christine McDougall is based in Australia where she has an impressive list of qualifications and record of accomplishment built over five years of full time international coaching.

Christine called her presentation 'Radical Truth' and she certainly caused a few sharp intakes of breath with her radical ideas. After explaining how coaching allows us to use only a third of our time delivering the coaching product [with the remainder devoted equally to designing the product and finding

clients] she suggested that coaches could earn far more than they currently believe they could earn. As Australians are not noted for irony, we must assume that she was sincere.

We were invited to break out of the 'hourly-rate mentality' and design a product that could create residual income for every week of the year. She had done this herself creating a non-competitive business liaison with a major Australian corporate coaching organisation. They passed any enquiries for personal coaching to her and, in return, she paid them a commission. Her clients then pay on an annual retainer basis for her services.

Christine spoke passionately about the need for the coaching profession to shed its cottage industry status and develop as a major market force. At the start she promised to challenge some cosy beliefs. By the end, several questions from the floor challenged her own concepts and a lively debate ensued.

After a welcome break to refresh and dress up, the evening dinner was enjoyed by all, with top class entertainment from Craig McMurdo and his band and cabaret from Graham P. Jolly. The essence of parties is that you can do what you want without fear of reprisal. So, in best Fleet Street tradition, this reporter will leave the rest of the night to your happy recollection if you were there, and your vivid imagination if you were not.

But, whatever you do, do not miss the next event!

