



CATHY O'DOWD



Cathy O'Dowd is the first woman in the world to climb Mount Everest from both its north and south sides. She was also the first South African and African (from either sex) to summit Everest.

As a professional speaker, Cathy presents her message to companies in 33 countries on six continents, sharing with corporate audiences the insights she gained about herself and the people around her, through the extreme stress and overwhelming challenge they faced daily.

Cathy, who describes the years she spent on or around Everest as "a degree in living, remains an active adventurer. From taking a dog-sled expedition through the remote wilderness of the Norwegian Arctic to the northern-most point of Europe, to tackling the sheer rock walls of Yosemite National Park, there is always a challenge waiting for her.

Cathy, who grew up in Johannesburg, South Africa, has climbed ever since leaving school. She was completing her Masters degree in Media Studies at Rhodes University, and working as university lecturer, when she saw an advert in a newspaper for a place on the 1st South African Everest Expedition, and was selected out of more than 200 women who applied. Cathy O'Dowd, the apprentice on the team, reached the summit on 25 May 1996. It was, however, a tough introduction, as British team-mate Bruce Herrod was killed on the descent.

In 1998 she took on the challenge of the treacherous north side of Everest, where George Mallory had famously disappeared in 1924. Her attempt ended just hours below the summit when she stopped to try and save a dying American woman. In 1999 she returned once more, and succeeded, becoming the first woman in the world to climb Everest from both north and south sides.

In 2000 she became only the fourth woman in the world to climb Lhotse, the world's fourth highest mountain. And in 2003 she returned to Everest one more time to make a bold but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to climb a new route on the notorious east face of Everest.

Cathy has written two books about her Everest experiences, *Everest: Free To Decide*, co-written with Ian Woodall, and *Just for the love of it*, translated into German as *Aus Liebe Zum Berg*. She is currently living in

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Andorra, in the Pyrenees mountains, while she pursues her speaking career, and explores the mountains of Europe. She is married to Ian Woodall, the leader of her first Everest expedition.

HER MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKING

Team dynamics and leadership on the slopes of the world's highest mountain. Everest: at 29 032 feet high, this is literally the world's biggest challenge - 12 000 vertical feet of rock, ice and snow. Of the climbers who tackle this challenge, 75% will fail, one in a hundred will die.

What makes the mountain so difficult? The obvious answers are crevasses, avalanches, blizzards. However, the most dangerous thing you will ever encounter on Everest is people: yourself, your team-mates.

Reach for the heights! draws on the lessons Cathy O'Dowd learnt from her first Everest expedition. With the focus on finances and logistics, human dynamic was not given much attention. The team collapsed into conflict from the first day, and three members resigned before even reaching the foot of Everest.

Cathy and her team-mates discovered that there are hidden obstacles that must be met before the climbing can start, and throughout the expedition. And there are hidden tools that allow the successful 25% to triumph over the rest.

There are three hidden obstacles as fierce as any storm:

- **Complacency:** which so easily destroys the achievement of a seemingly successful team. A climber ignores the safety procedures for two minutes and slips on the slick ice – to his death.
- **Stress:** caught in tiny tents for a week by bad weather, the team threatens to collapse over disputes about who does the cooking.
- **Fear:** a final knife-edge ridge, with a 6000 foot drop. We have the technical competence to climb it, but can we overcome the voices of fear in our heads?

There are six key tools the successful teams use to meet the challenges of the mountain:

- One team, one aim
- Flexible planning
- Passion for the process
- Determination
- Exploit disaster
- Make Mandela moments

SERVICES

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