

Real-World Leadership for Business

The Down-to-Earth Expertise of Space Shuttle Mission Commander Rick Searfoss

Rick Searfoss offers a stunning variety of real-world business leadership, teamwork, innovation, and execution excellence expertise developed over many years. His transition from astronaut and Space Shuttle commander to business leader was revved into high gear after a life-changing personal meeting in 1998 with famous management expert Stephen R. Covey. Dr. Covey counseled him that with his many years of leadership and teamwork, he indeed had the “Right Stuff” of what modern business needs most of all – leadership and teamwork.

That pathway to business-relevant leadership experiences began with his graduating number one in his class at the United States Air Force Academy. Not only is the USAF Academy one of the most selective universities in the nation, it is also an unparalleled leadership development institution, and graduating first in a class of nearly a thousand such ambitious leaders is a stunning achievement. Progressing to continually more demanding positions in his Air Force career, Rick’s leadership and operational excellence was recognized and rewarded through early promotion to the ranks of Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel.

Colonel Searfoss’ selection as a United States astronaut was in itself marked by an intense level of competition where less than one in a hundred qualified applicants, and less than one in many thousands of all hopefuls, is chosen. Yet within this distinguished corps, he in turn was selected as only one in four astronauts to actually command a 500 million dollar human space mission with lives and national assets on the line. His work in commanding the highly successful STS-90 Neurolab mission, the most complex and productive science research human space mission ever flown, stands as strong testimony to his leadership, teambuilding, operations, and execution excellence skills. This foundation did, as Dr. Covey predicted, serve him very well in moving into the business world.

Several years later, Rick Searfoss is now a recognized and sought-after “New Space” business development expert, skilled and experienced at communicating future value and potential of the new millenium’s most creative and innovative ventures. He has served as Chief Judge for the \$10 million Ansari X Prize for the first private human-to-space venture, Vice President of program development for the Zero Gravity Corporation, and not only as test pilot, but also business development lead consultant and on the board for XCOR Aerospace. In his concurrent role as Director of Flight Test for XCOR he guides all flight operations of unique rocket propelled test aircraft and development of the Lynx suborbital spaceplane. These projects represent leading-edge innovation taken to the next level, truly disruptive, game-changing technology that is shattering old notions in the Space Industry. In all these experiences, he has been on the ground floor of establishing and operating new businesses during a revolutionary restructuring of the aerospace industry as nimble,

entrepreneurial ventures now lead the industry in terms of innovation and creativity.

Though his work in the New Space industry focuses intently on the new and innovative, Rick has nonetheless still always found it valuable to focus on the basics of first principles and thorough, effective execution. His consulting and speaking work across many industries – manufacturing, pharmaceutical, financial, healthcare, energy, and more – has convinced him more than ever that the organizational challenges virtually all enterprises face have much in common. Those challenges can only be effectively addressed through specific presentation followed by correct application of those principles. The combination of twenty-plus years of Air Force and NASA service, mixed with the subsequent ten years of leadership in both focused space industry work and across the broad spectrum of many industries, give Commander and business leader Rick Searfoss an unmatched real-world expertise and perspective for both professional speaking presentations and high-level consulting clients.

Combining lessons-learned from his prior experience commanding the most complex research human space mission ever with timely, relevant observations from his current business experiences, Rick provides a unique and valuable insight for all business audiences. In particular, in such a turbulent and uncertain environment as we all face today, his “back-to-basics,” universal-principles approach has been received incredibly well by clients in every conceivable industry. Whether the particular focus of a given keynote speech is on execution and operational excellence, resiliency in the face of adversity, innovation, or his foundational leadership and teamwork presentations, all his audiences leave inspired and uniquely better prepared to succeed with their own economic and business challenges.