

John Maclean

Extreme wheelchair athlete and mentor

John Maclean is an extreme wheelchair athlete and Olympic medalist who knows what it means to push beyond physical and mental boundaries. His messages on goal setting, overcoming adversity and achieving success have inspired audiences, of all ages and from all fields, across the country.

John Mclean says; "In business and in life, we all face obstacles and crossroads. While my 20-year story seems like an extreme account of setbacks and facing up to them, the message is not about those obstacles, or how they got there, more about learning to see challenges, or adversity if you like, and welcoming it as a fuel to feed off . Any of the great people I have met have harnessed adversity and turned it into an energy that allows them to achieve so much more. All of us can do that, we simply have to make that choice."

About John Mclean:

A natural sportsman from childhood, in 1988 John Maclean was a promising rugby league player with the Penrith Panthers. During fitness training, while cycling near his hometown, John was hit by an eight tonne truck. The impact resulted in John suffering multiple breaks to his pelvis and back, a fractured sternum, punctured lungs, a broken arm and left John a paraplegic.

It took astonishing courage and determination, but somehow this near-fatal accident was the making of him. Despite the grief of what he had lost, the excruciating physical pain and the challenges of daily life in a wheelchair, John decided he would become bigger and stronger than ever. He set about proving himself in the toughest events the world had to offer.

In 1995 John made history by becoming the first wheelchair athlete to finish the world's toughest multi-discipline sporting event - the Hawaiian Ironman Triathlon, drawing on all his inner strength to continue to the finish line after falling outside cut-off times in the early stages. The following year John narrowly missed the cut off time again, this time due to a flat tyre.

In 1997 he not only finished within the cut-off times, he beat a third of the field and became the first ever wheelchair category winner. In 2002 John became the first non-American inducted into the Hawaiian Ironman Triathlon Hall of Fame.



Many more extreme sporting challenges followed, including becoming the first wheelchair athlete to swim the English Channel, complete the gruelling Molokai Ocean challenge (World Championships for open water paddling), and racing in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. In 2006 John took part in the invitation-only extreme endurance event Ultraman World Championships, in Hawaii. In September 2007 he and his rowing partner claimed a silver medal at the Rowing World Championships, a gold in Italy at the International Regatta in April 2008 and a silver medal at the 2008 Beijing games.

John has taken his career beyond sport and beyond the personal. In 1998 he set up the John Maclean Foundation to inspire and enable young people in wheelchairs to achieve their ambitions.

Through sponsorship and John's own national and international speaking and mentoring work in the corporate world, the Foundation has raised more than two million dollars for direct assistance to the people who need it.

In 2000, John McLean was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia and the Australian Sports Medal for services to Australian Sport. He has authored two books about his extraordinary life; Sucking the Marrow Out of Life and Full Circle.

John Mclean talks about:

Frequently called on to provide motivational lectures on goal setting, inspiration and achievement, John speaks on overcoming adversity by focusing on one's abilities. Tailoring his message to clients needs, John covers themes such as spirit tickler, change, overcoming adversity, goal setting, vision, focus, drive, self-commitment and performance.

Client Testimonials



John's presentation was entertaining, motivating and ultimately uplifting. John has continually achieved seemingly impossible goals throughout his impressive sporting career. To hear him talk about how hard he fought for each of those successes was extraordinary. John has a personal philosophy that ties in beautifully with our corporate values of passion, innovation, agility and insight. He has demonstrated many times over that with the right attitude, adversity can be turned into opportunity. I personally admire his courage, drive, creativity and endurance, all which are traits that are relevant to the business world. His determination was contagious, and had a powerful affect on our staff. We were all challenged to revisit our own personal and professional goals and expectations, buoyed by John's message that anything is possible.

Aviva Investors Asia Pacific



What a great delight it was to have John Maclean spend time with us at our conference this year. It was not surprising that he received a standing ovation as a result of his presentation that was both inspirational and thought provoking. Our people were moved, motivated and challenged by many of the messages delivered by John and incredibly impressed by his humility given the enormity of his achievements. There is no doubt that he will resonate in the minds of the delegates for a very long time, and to say that John was the perfect fit for our theme of 'anything is possible' is an understatement! I am sure he will have lit a spark in more than a few of us as a result.

Heritage Building Society



John Maclean has been closely involved with Express Data over the past 8 years as a motivational speaker, mentor, management coach and values adviser for the leadership team....John Maclean has an incredible ability to communicate at every level about the potential that lies within each of us and to help people to believe in their strengths and to take the initiative unconsciously participating and contributing to the culture and performance of Express Data.

Express Data

Client Testimonials



John Maclean's story is an inspiring testament to how tragedy and adversity can lead to triumph and personal growth. To look into his eyes and hear him speak is to know that anything is possible. The language of sports may be universal, but John's journey speaks to all of us in a voice that's personal, passionate and full of fire.

Gatorade Sports Marketing



John's story of overcoming adversity and setting himself remarkable goals was well received by our audience. John captivated our audience and many people were so inspired by his story. I had grown men afterwards tell me they had to fight back tears. John was an absolute pleasure to deal with and really went well beyond our expectations.

Lion Co

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