

Richard De Crespigny AM

Captain of Qantas Flight 32

Captain Richard de Crespigny AM is one of Qantas's most senior and most experienced pilots.

His considerable skills as a pilot of some 35 years was put to the test on 4 November 2010 when he was in charge of the airline's huge A380 Airbus - the world's largest and most advanced commercial jetliner - as it left Singapore for Sydney.

Despite being fitted with state-of-the-art technology, just four minutes after take-off, an explosion shattered one of its four engines, resulting in extensive damage to the aircraft. It was the most serious incident that the A380 had experienced since it entered operations and was potential life-threatening.

Richard de Crespigny and his crew faced an enormous challenge. Not only did they have to ensure that the 440 passengers remained calm during this terrifying ordeal, they also had to keep the aircraft in the air then eventually land it safely on the ground.

Displaying incredible professionalism under pressure, Richard de Crespigny and his technical and cabin crew worked for two hours to stabilise the damage, keep the stricken aircraft flying then manoeuvre it back towards Changi Airport in Singapore.

But once on the ground, they still weren't out of danger. The no. 1 engine refused to shut down and had to be doused by emergency crews. Also fuel was leaking from the left wing onto the brakes, which were extremely hot from maximum braking, causing another extremely dangerous situation. Because of this, passengers had to remain onboard for another two hours, although the cabin crew were ready with evacuation procedures, before it was safe to disembark. Incredibly, there were no injuries reported among the 440 passengers and 29 crew onboard the plane.

After such a life-changing event, Richard de Crespigny is most certainly better qualified than most to talk about teamwork, problem solving, judgement, knowledge, calmness, experience and putting years of highly-skilled training into practice. Richard has since become one of the world's leading corporate speakers and has shared this terrifying experience with audiences around the world. He has presented to Fortune 500 companies and the Federal Government and its agencies, including defence, safety and investigation.

His best-selling autobiography QF32, published by Pan McMillan, tells the story of the incident in gripping detail. The book won the Best Non Fiction award in the 2013 Australian Book Industry Awards and the Australian Independent Booksellers Best Non Fiction award for books released in Australia in 2012.

In February 2014, the story of Richard de Crespigny's role in overcoming a potentially catastrophic aircraft accident aired on television in the Nine Network's Mayday, Mayday - Terror on QF32.

The young Richard de Crespigny got his first taste of a future flying career as a 14-year-old when his father organised a tour of the RAAF Academy at Point Cook in Victoria and in 1975, aged 17, he joined the RAAF. One year later, he started flying. During his 11 years with the RAAF, he was seconded as Aide-de-Camp to two Australian Governors General - Sir Zelman Cowan and Sir Ninian Stephen.

Richard remained with the RAAF until 1986 when he joined Qantas, converting to Boeing 747s. He converted to A380 command in 2008 as one of Qantas' most senior captains.

On Australia Day 2016, Richard was appointed a member of the Order of Australia in recognition of significant service to the aviation industry, nationally and internationally, particularly to flight safety and to the community.

Richard de Crespigny is an outstanding speaker, extremely engaging and inspirational with a powerful and unforgettable story to share. His message will appeal to many and varied audiences.

Client Testimonials

Richard delivered a presentation that was compelling and thought-provoking. His QF32 story brought our Safety Day to life and was a powerful illustration of how 'Chronic Unease' can play out in real life. Never before have I seen an audience from Shell Australia so captivated and engaged. Safety is our number one priority and Richard really delivered for us. We look forward to working with him again in the future.

Shell Australia

Richard's presentation was simply awe inspiring and one of the best talks I have heard at any conference anywhere, and I have been to a few! As you saw by the standing ovation Richard received, I was not on my own in thinking this. The real strength of Qantas Airways is its people and Richard only cemented this view for me and our Corporate Members. To be able to hear firsthand the QF32 story from Richard not only sent some incredible messages about Qantas the brand to our important Corporate Members. It highlighted a great story of human triumph and added a real depth to our Symposium theme, Beyond Success.

Travelscene Corporate

Throughout the hour+ that Richard presented you could not hear a pin drop, the clang of cutlery or see people playing with their mobile devices. So to say they were engrossed and intrigued was an understatement. Richard is a brilliant presenter that captured the minds and gravity of the QF32 event but also relayed business meaning. In terms of Leadership, Management skills in crisis and depth under amazing pressure. I have no hesitation in recommending Richard to many and varied audiences, not just business or IT.

ANZ

Client Testimonials

Captain de Crespigny's presentation is compelling. It will open your mind to new concepts in crisis management such as inverting the logic and challenging conventions. It reinforces the principles of leadership, executive management, accountability & teamwork. I recommend the presentation and the book to anyone who is, or who aspires to be, a leader. Captain de Crespigny and his team not only saved nearly 500 lives but by sharing his experiences Captain de Crespigny enables others to learn from this extraordinary event.

Australian Federal Police