

Book Review – Marjory Mair

Breathtaking Communication Tools and Techniques for Everyday Leaders

By Fiona Brennan-Scott

Divine Flow Publishing, 2023, 282 pp, hardback, £22.00, ISBN 978-1-7392166-0-3

I think it would have been wonderful if Moses could have met Fiona Brennan-Scott or had the opportunity to read her recent book *Breathtaking Communication – Tools and Techniques for Everyday Leaders*.

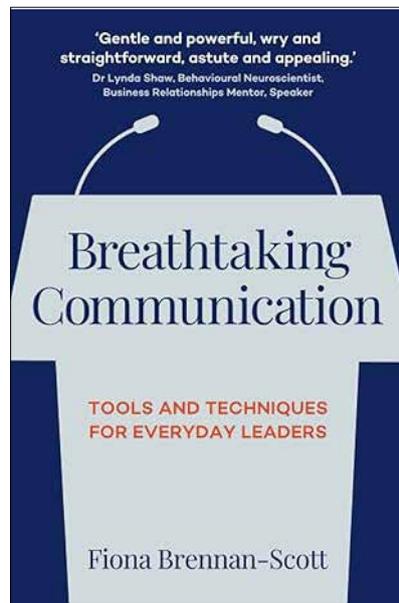
In Exodus 3 when Moses meets the Lord on Mount Horeb and he's commissioned to go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt, after a series of excuses he finally says "Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue" (Ex.4:10, NIV).

As business leaders, we know our ability to communicate clearly, concisely and with conviction to a small or large group, round a meeting room table or 1:1, will directly relate to the results we achieve.

Breathtaking Communication is a solid book, packed with 22 chapters divided into six sections where the author Fiona Brennan-Scott shares from over 30 years of experience in the corporate world. She has moved from being a speech and drama teacher to running her business BESPOKEN as a voice and speech coach. Speaking in public is often quoted as the number one fear so whether you're a seasoned speaker, want to build your competence and/or confidence, or just manage your nerves better, this book will serve you well.

In Section One, Fiona gets her key message across through a very helpful graphic and practical exercise. In short, breathtaking communication is all about loving your audience. Yes, our

message, our expertise and our presence are important but if we don't meet the needs of the audience we are effectively a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal!



Section Two is the substantial chapter, getting us ready to learn and being packed with practical tips and techniques for using the whole body and the breath. There are 16 exercises on voice production which Fiona identifies as the fundamental skill in developing ability and confidence in speaking. In her quest to equip speakers for breathtaking communication, Fiona has generously provided not only the knowledge but practical exercises that will build skill and confidence.

Sections Three, Four and Five address more specific questions from how to be your best in online and hybrid situations, to preparing and using notes and slides, managing a Q&A session,

handling a job interview and many more. Case studies from Fiona's extensive experience bring the learning to life. However it was the meaty Chapter 11, 'How do I keep people awake when I speak?', that really caught my attention.

Finally, the book has five Appendices, one of which has been written specifically for Faith Leaders. Fiona shares her thoughts, and challenges the often stated 'All Welcome Here' to show what a genuine welcome might really mean from start to finish. This includes entering the building, the reading of scripture and sermon lengths and helpfully links chapter references in the book for further explanation or practical actions.

Initially I struggled with the book, as the introduction has many references to performance and entertainment rather than presentations for everyday leaders as their authentic selves. Perhaps a paragraph explaining the distinction would have helped me to surmount this quicker.

Ending where I started in Exodus with Moses' excuses on Mount Horeb, here's the reply Moses received - "The LORD said to him, "Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." (Ex 4:11-12, NIV)

Breathtaking Communication will not teach you what to say, but there's a raft of tools and techniques here that will help you to speak with clarity, conciseness and conviction. 



Marjory Mair is a Leadership & Team Coach. Since 2002 she has been running Marjory Mair Associates, enabling leaders and teams to flourish across not-for-profit organisations and SMEs. She is also a support board member for Christian Business Leaders and enjoys a great night out on the town each month as a street pastor.