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MEET THE *REAL*  
**Erin Brockovich**

Plus five other motivational speakers  
who've had their lives turned into movies

# Star Power

**I**s there life after Hollywood? If you are actually in the entertainment business, there may not be. But for people who have had their lives turned into movies, the world of corporate events offers lots of opportunity for them to continue to spread their inspirational messages.

It would be close to impossible to get a Julia Roberts, or a Tom Hanks, or a Morgan Freeman to agree to speak at an incentive event. (And if it were possible it would cost a for-

verance, ingenuity and leadership that is directly applicable to a corporate environment. Erin Brockovich was a secretary in a law firm fighting for justice for an entire town. Capt. James Lovell Jr. was the commander of a crippled space capsule trying to return to earth. Joe Clark was the principal of a troubled inner city school struggling to turn the institution around and create a better life for his students. Rudy Ruettiger was an undersized, underprivileged son of

an oil refinery worker who worked for years to achieve his dream of

These six individuals actually had their lives turned into major motion pictures and are available to speak to your group

tune.) But it is possible to get the real Erin Brockovich (Julia Roberts in *Erin Brockovich*), the real Capt. James Lovell Jr. (Tom Hanks in *Apollo 13*) and the real Joe Clark (Morgan Freeman in *Lean on Me*) to speak at your next event.

We've profiled six people who have had their lives transferred to the silver screen. Each offers an inspiring tale of courage, empowerment, perse-

verance, ingenuity and leadership that is directly applicable to a corporate environment. Erin Brockovich was a secretary in a law firm fighting for justice for an entire town. Capt. James Lovell Jr. was the commander of a crippled space capsule trying to return to earth. Joe Clark was the principal of a troubled inner city school struggling to turn the institution around and create a better life for his students. Rudy Ruettiger was an undersized, underprivileged son of an oil refinery worker who worked for years to achieve his dream of playing football for Notre Dame. Kaleil Isaza Tuzman was one of the many dot-com entrepreneurs who had the world at his feet and then lost it all in the blink of an eye. Jerri Neilsen was a doctor whose courage and endurance were put to the ultimate test when she was forced to treat herself for breast cancer while doing research in the Antarctic.

Here are their stories.

Photo: Mark Robert Halper

**INSIDE: ERIN BROCKOVICH • DANIEL "RUDY" RUETTIGER • CAPTAIN**





LOVELL JR. • JOE CLARK • KALEIL ISAZA TUZMAN • DR. JERRI NIELSEN

# Dressed for success

Her clothes used to keep people from taking her seriously, but now everyone is noticing Erin Brockovich for what she has to say, not how she looks **BY VINCENT ALONZO**

It's the summer of 2000, the night of Erin Brockovich's first public speaking engagement back in her home state of Kansas. Back stage, Brockovich's mother walks in, sees her daughter in one of her infamous bustiers and says: "Oh my God! You really dress like that?"

"Jesus Mom! Didn't you see the movie!?" Brockovich retorts.

At the time, *Erin Brockovich*, starring "America's sweetheart," Julia Roberts, was playing in thousands of theaters across the country. The film highlighted the role Brockovich, then a file clerk with a penchant for skimpy clothes, played in her law firm's class action suit against Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E). Back in the 1960s, the California power company began dumping toxic chemical waste nearby the small town of Hinkley, Calif. The waste eventually seeped into the town's water supply poisoning many of the residents in the area. Based on Brockovich's research, her law firm, the Westlake Village, Calif.-based Masry & Vititoe succeeded in securing \$333 million in damages, the largest legal settlement in United States history.

A year after her first

speaking gig, Brockovich recalls the dramatic turns her life has taken in the past few years. She's no longer an unemployed single mother desperate to find a job. She's now the director of environmental research at Masry & Vititoe. She's a sought after speaker at corporate events. And she's a published author. Her book, *Take it from Me, Life's a Struggle, But You Can Win*, (McGraw Hill) hits book stores this month.

But her wardrobe hasn't changed. She's sitting in the well-appointed living room of her home in an affluent Los Angeles suburb wearing a low-cut, rose jumper that

hugs every curve of her body. "I still run around in high-heels with my boobs hanging out. Even on casual days I wear high heels," she says as she extends a foot graced by a strappy high-heeled sandal.

But while her style has not changed, the way people react to it has. People no longer dismiss her because she dresses sexy. Before Ed Masry, partner in Masry & Vititoe, gave her the chance to realize her potential, Brockovich was stereotyped and not taken seriously in the workplace. "Somewhere in time, society decided that if you're tall, attractive, blond and busty, that's all you have to offer," she says. "That's not the way we should judge people. How I dress should not be a reflection of my work ethic and what job I can and cannot do. Big-boobs or no boobs should have no bearing on someone's ability to perform on the job. What happened to me happens to a lot of people. There are many reasons why people get marginalized—race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or whatever. There are many

women—and men—who could be so much more than they are if someone would just give them the chance."

Empowering individuals, no matter who they are, is a large part of Brockovich's message when she speaks to corporate groups. "People have lost the ability to feel powerful. If you give that back to them they'll do amazing things for you," she says. "Hinkley is the perfect example of the power of people. If only one person had come forward this class action suit wouldn't have succeeded. It took 634 people to come together. We still have that power and we don't exercise it enough. People still make the differ-





ence. And that's especially true in the corporate world."

In real life, as in the film, Brockovich was less concerned about the money in the case against PG&E than she was about the higher principle of holding PG&E accountable. "That's a huge part of my message to corporate groups," says Brockovich. "There are things missing in today's society that go beyond money and material possessions. We've forgotten about things like respect, honor and morals. Had one person who had the power to do something at PG&E back in the '60s, made a different decision, a lot of lives would have been saved. So I encourage people not to pursue success for the wrong reasons. We all know right from wrong. We have to be careful about the decisions we make because down the road they are going to impact somebody."

At the end of the movie, Julia Roberts, as Erin Brockovich, tells Albert Finney (who plays Ed Masry) that it's not about the money, it's about being recognized for the work that she's done. For the real Erin Brockovich, those words are a motivational mantra. "I think sometimes people search for false goals and that's what I talk about in my speaking engagements. Somehow the pursuit of happiness has been confused with money, power, and fame," she says. "Happiness has very little to do with any of those things. It's more important for people to have a sense of fulfillment in their job."

Brockovich feels that managers should be actively involved in helping their employees achieve that fulfillment and that empowerment is the key ingredient in the equation. She points to her own boss's decision to abandon his strategy for an early settlement in the Hinkley case as a model for all managers. "His decision to allow my principles to impact the way we handled the suit is what makes Ed such a fabulous

lawyer and a terrific manager in the business sense. Ed was able to figure out that I truly believed in my heart that PG&E needed to be held accountable for what happened. He knew that when I'm really digging my heels in it's because I think something is important."

And when someone with heels as high as Brockovich's digs them in, it's best not to try to dig them out.

To book Erin Brockovich as a speaker contact Betsy Burgh at the William Morris Agency, (212) 586-5100.

### "Hey Ed, you might want to rethink your ties!"

That's what Julia Roberts (Erin Brockovich) told Albert Finney (Ed Masry) in the movie *Erin Brockovich* when Finney suggested that she might want to rethink her wardrobe. "The odd thing is that a lot of the clothes I wore in the workplace that were considered scandalous in 1995 don't raise an eyebrow in the workplace today," says

Erin Brockovich. "I have seen women in some workplaces where I have to stop and say, 'Damn! That's a Brockovich outfit.'"

Could it be that after more than three decades of integrating women into the workplace that women are starting to feel more comfortable expressing their femininity? Brockovich thinks that may

be the case.

"I think that women are beginning to feel okay about being attractive and feeling attractive in the workplace," she says. "If somebody feels proud of her legs and feels like wearing a shorter skirt, why not? I'm a woman and I don't want to be chastised because I wear something sexy. It's not to be provocative or upset anyone. It's just, I'm a woman and I don't know why I can't be that and still work. It doesn't mean that a woman is not smart."

But even Brockovich admits there should be limits in certain situations. "If I'm going into court or something and I have a bustier on, I'll put a jacket over it. And it's still nice." —V.A.

