

Barry de Geest

As someone who believes “you’re only limited by what you think”, Barry de Geest is living proof that disability needn’t hold you back. If anything, he’s seen more, done more and achieved more than most. By far and away *not* your average New Zealander, you’ll love hearing his inspirational, courageous and insightful story.



One of the first things you will notice about Barry is the fact he’s in a wheelchair - yet it isn’t long before his tremendous intellect, great sense of humour and positive outlook overshadow all else. Born with no arms and short legs as a result of the drug thalidomide, Barry’s disability certainly doesn’t cramp his style, nor has it ever dampened his enthusiasm for living life to the full.

In his younger years Barry achieved sporting glory as coxswain for the Oamaru Rowing Club crew that took out the New Zealand title. He also represented Otago for rowing, and was nominated as a New Zealand representative.

Thirty years on, he’s the owner of a large and successful company, a proud single Dad, a member on / advisor to numerous boards and councils, a professional business consultant and a tireless advocate for the rights of the disabled. Passionate about helping these individuals pursue their dreams, Barry sets a terrific example. “Once people start realising they are capable of things, it opens up their whole lives,” he says. He insists on being “treated like the next guy”, and in as much, drives his own vehicle and lives independently.

Barry is in constant demand on the public speaking circuit, and talks on a diverse range of subjects, from overcoming hardship, through to personal challenge, and knowing that with passion, anything is possible. Barry’s spirit and determination is unique; his story is moving,

enlightening and educational. Additionally, his direct approach, combined with his honesty and humour reaches out to his audience, and offers a brand new, totally fresh and original perspective on life.

PROFESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS: Co-founder / owner of Renaissance Group • Board member on Disabled Persons Assembly and Crippled Children's Society • Elected member of Auckland District Health Board • Committee member on Mobility Dogs • Instrumental in setting up Health & Disabilities Advocates • Managed and successfully helped organisations that were in trouble (e.g. Wellington Disability Resource Centre, Manawatu Crippled Children's Society).

SPORTING HIGHLIGHTS: Coxswain for Oamaru Rowing Club (1972-78) • Part of crew that won New Zealand Title (1976) • Selected to represent Otago in the 8's (1976-8) • Nominated to represent New Zealand • A Grade rifle shooter.

SPEAKING HIGHLIGHTS: Guest speaker for Human Rights Commission on numerous occasions • Guest speaker at the New Zealand Leadership Training Programme • Guest speaker on TV One's Breakfast show • Motivational speaker for insurance companies.

"Dear Barry, I just wanted to say thanks again for such an awesome experience yesterday... extremely positive comments about your presentation... thanks for enlightening and entertaining our team!"
Katie Noble, General Manager, Allied Medical Ltd.

For further information, or to book Barry as your Guest Speaker please contact:

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