

About David Whyte

*This is not the age of information.
This is **not**
the age of information.*

*Forget the news,
and the radio,
and the blurred screen.*

*This is the time
of loaves
and fishes.*

*People are hungry,
and one good word is bread
for a thousand.*

- David Whyte
"Loaves and Fishes"
from *The House of Belonging*

Whatever you do, don't call David Whyte a corporate poet. He is a poet who works in the land of the bottom line. He has built a business through the unlikely merger of profits and pentameter by offering seminars sprinkled with the verse of Dante, Coleridge, Eliot and Blake, among others, as well as his own. Mr. Whyte's workshops have titles like "Exploring the Shadow that Informs our Work," "In the Service of Life: Personal Destiny and the Soul's Desires" and "Through the Eye of The Needle: Reimagining and Remembering Ourselves in the New Workplace." In them he uses lines that he has memorized from about 200 poems to explore creativity, power and the soul at work. "I don't have an all-embracing vision which people have to buy. I'm simply trying to work with the struggles we all deal with every day while we're trying to live out our personal destinies and make a living at the same time." Returning to the world of verse from the land of the bottom line fits with what he tells executives: "You cannot choose either the artist or the pragmatist inside you. There's a place for both."

-*The New York Times*

"In North America, we spend more time at work than we do with our families or in our places of worship or in the natural world. And so if we are not asking questions that are germane to what is real for us in life, then we are in very big trouble as individuals. . . ." (Whyte said). Boeing President Phil Condit said that he has yet to see an effective description of what Whyte actually does. "Newspaper articles talk about David reading poetry to Boeing executives," Condit said. "But David is much more of a storyteller, someone from outside our system saying that there are other ways of looking at the way we do things. David Whyte causes you to think."

-*Boeing Manager Magazine*

It seems Whyte has already bowled over British captains of industry. Tony Morgan, Chief Executive Officer of the Industrial Society, met Whyte earlier this year. "I turned up on the second day of a conference of complexity and strategy to find that he had spoken the previous day, and everyone I met was raving about him. The delegates were like a who's who of British industry — and Whyte stole the show."

-The Times, London

A change-agent with a difference, Whyte uses poetry to "try to bring to life the experience of change itself." This, he says, is important because "understanding our literate and artistic traditions calls on the very part of us that we are asking to be reintroduced back into our work." As competition gets cut-throat and companies cut jobs and costs to stay in business, revitalizing the workforce is fast becoming absolutely vital. But, says Whyte, "it is impossible to build a creative, vital, adaptable workforce unless every member of that team is asking germane questions about their own lives." Not surprisingly, blue-chip America is taking notice.

-The Economic Times, New Delhi

(Whyte's corporate) audiences are often quiet at first, sometimes doubtful of results, curious about finding a poet, of all things, in their midst. But in the end, participants leave convinced. Whyte's success is an unusual byproduct of a movement that many businesses began pursuing some 20 years ago. Ironically, in the midst of hard-driving expansion and mergers, companies found that certain traits and sensitivities at the personal level . . . were an important ingredient in managerial success. Corporations began seeking managers who were alert about their own feelings and the emotions of others. "Poetry is magnificent at doing that," says Whyte. Its language is universal enough to make people aware of similar ideas and experiences in their own lives, he says. It opens their thought, removes limits, and allows them to conceive — often for the first time — new and unexpected answers to old problems. Dealing with the vast, bewildering shifts in today's mercurial business climate requires an individual to understand himself or herself and take a more penetrating look at the world. The language of poetry, Whyte says, is extremely precise in dealing with the areas of the human psyche that are involved in the process of "the fiery corporate change." Poetry, he maintains, calls upon a part of the human character that is at home in the corporate world.

-The Christian Science Monitor

A dynamic speaker, Whyte doesn't lecture but recites dozens of stories and poems, including some of his own, to help bring to life the experience and emotion of change. Whyte says such poems help managers and other employees to rethink their daily habits and assumptions, thus stirring up some creative juices. One senior executive: "My first reaction was: What a waste of time," he says. "I thought to myself, what could a poet possibly contribute?" But the executive now says that Whyte "helped us to think differently than we ever had before. We had to look inside ourselves."

-Business Week