

Client: Full Potential Group Yellow News
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Yellow News...

INTERVIEW

SPOTLIGHT ON

DR ANDRÉ VERMEULEN

Neuroscience champion
André Vermeulen
on how developing
people gives him joy

Dr André Vermeulen is a passionate family man, business innovator and neuroscience fanatic. He is the founding member and CEO of Neuro-Link, a consultancy specialising in the neuroscience of workplace learning, and a corporate consultant to the Full Potential Group.

As a student of neuroscience, he has been working in the field of talent development and performance optimisation for more than 27 years and is a member of the Neuroscience Research Group of the University of Pretoria, where he also lectures part time. His main function in this group is to make applied neuroscience solutions available to help the world of business drive and improve their results, which helps his regional and country partners across the world to be continually updated.

His role as corporate consultant gains him valuable insight into clients' frontline workplace challenges which he has used to develop a cutting-edge talent development and performance improvement system consisting of neuro-agility



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assessments and learning solutions, which is used by thousands of adults in the workplace, students in education, and athletes across the globe.

You can also often find Dr Vermeulen giving inspirational talks on numerous prestigious platforms like TEDx Johannesburg and ATD ICE, on the TV and radio, and hosting his own television programme called *Mind Matters*.

Why training and how did you start?

As a young adult, I never felt it easy to speak to people, so I never believed that I could work with others. But when I discovered that, actually, my strongest intelligence potential was being logical, and being people-smart, my world changed profoundly. I had to learn that I had the potential but I hadn't yet developed the appropriate skills that should be aligned with that potential. So I started the journey of aligning and learning the skills necessary to work with, and speak to, people.

In 1999 I challenged my fear of public speaking and spoke for the first time at the ATD International Conference and Exposition in Atlanta. That is where my journey of being an international keynote speaker began. Ever since, I have spoken at



Developing people makes my heart sing!

ATD every year. This has set me free to pursue and live my passion.

Developing people makes my heart sing! The work I do today is talking to people to help them find their true potential by discovering their amazing neurological design and learning the skills to change their potential into competence. Learning and development was, and still is, the trigger that set me free to become who I was designed to be. It set me free to have the privilege of living my passion and purpose.

Who or what inspires you?

What inspires me is when ordinary people become extraordinary – by taking on challenges that may seem much bigger than themselves, they overcome those challenges by confronting their

IT'S ALL ABOUT ME

Education

Therapon University and University of Pretoria.

Family

This year I will be married for 30 years. I have three sons and a daughter. Having children was the greatest thing that ever happened to me and my wife. My eldest two sons and I share a collective purpose. They work with me.

Location

Denver, US, although I live in South Africa for the moment.

Hobbies

Rugby, karate, sport, trees, nature.

Favourite place

Kruger National Park.

Book

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor E Frankl.

Music

The Corrs, U2, Flogging Molly, Leonard Cohen, Neil Diamond, The White Buffalo, Adele and Sam Smith.

Movie

Last of the Mohicans.

Technology

Apple iPhone and iPad.



fears. Nelson Mandela has been an inspirational role model for me in doing exactly this in South Africa in the time I started to pursue my life purpose. He is famous for saying: "I was in jail for 27 years, but my mind was never in jail." At the time I was a prisoner of my own limited thinking and this was the message I needed to hear. That statement has always stayed with me and inspired me to try to be the best I can be.

Subsequently, I also started looking for ways to improve myself. I was fascinated with learning how the brain works. I knew the key to discover my potential was locked up in my brain. As I started learning and discovering more about my true potential, my struggle became my victory. I knew that there were many others that also

wanted to discover the truth about their unique design and who they are. My journey of becoming more of who I can be, and learning about the performance optimisation needs and talent development needs of clients is what inspired me. This has led me to conceptualise neuro-agility as a core competence to optimise people's learning ability and agility.

What has been your lowest moment, and what is your noblest hour?

I have had, and still experience, many low moments and those are when people responsible for the growth and development of others do not see them for who they can be and subsequently prevent them from becoming more



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of who they could be by not providing them with opportunities to develop. Most companies say people are their greatest resource, but few reflect that in their budgets, lacking investment in developing their people.

Fortunately, I also have many great moments. Some are personal, like having a wonderful wife and being the hero of four children. On a professional level it's about being invited to be a keynote speaker at various talent development conferences across the globe where I get the opportunity of



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sharing my passion, but also the truth about how neuroscience can help the world of business, sport and education optimise brain performance and develop talent. A highlight for me this year will be to speak at the 2018 Association for Talent Development International Conference and Exposition (ATD ICE) where Barack Obama will be the opening plenary speaker.

What and when was your career turning point?

My career turning point happened when I spoke for the first time at the ATD ICE conference in 1999. That was where I truly started realising my life purpose and committed to my calling of developing people. Subsequently, I have grown in confidence and stature and have been invited in the past five years to regularly contribute on panels discussing neuroscience issues related to talent development and performance improvement. There will soon be an exciting ATD publication, based on the collective effort of many industry experts and scientists, exploring the connectivity between talent development and neuroscience.

Perhaps the greatest blessing from all this is that one of my sons, who is a neurophysiologist and shares the same passion and purpose I do, presented at ATD last year. He will co-present with me for the first time this year at the



THE 360 DEGREE

"I was introduced to André Vermeulen through a TEDx talk after tirelessly watching every video and reading every book I could find on the subject of brain-based therapy. I immediately reached out to him and the very next day my husband and I had the pleasure of experiencing his brain profiles personally. I am honoured to say that he is not only one of the most brilliant minds I've ever met; he is humble, generous, trustworthy, and lives with great intention and purpose. His system of developing people is like nothing I have ever seen. He has developed a programme that changes standard learning into so much more. It gives everyone an opportunity to reach their highest potential; in school, at work, or in life."

Dr Nicole Kimmel, Thriveology

"André Vermeulen is one of those rare people – a genuine expert in the field of neuroscience who understands people and the potential they have to transform themselves and the organisations they work in. His passion for his subject comes through in everything he does in ways that are helpful to others. Add to that, he is an absolute pleasure to work with."

Neville Pritchard, People in Flow Ltd, and Neuro-Link Europe Ltd UK

"A life-changing experience is how I can best describe meeting André. Authenticity, expertise, curiosity, excitement for discovering and developing people's potential, love for others, desire to contribute, spiritual wisdom, and above all passion for his calling are just a few words in an attempt to describe who he is and what he gives so generously to those he encounters in his personal and professional path. Indeed, André is an outstanding example of a leader and an authority in the field of neuroscience."

Edith Tiencken, Staff Builders, US



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2018 ATD ICE. My second son, it seems, is soon to follow. Happiness! The work will continue long after I am not here.

Describe your best learning and development experience

One of the greatest privileges of being a people-developer is to meet some of the most interesting and smartest people on the planet. Every nation and culture has a different view and approach to learning and although some, I believe, are more progressive than others, I would not want to mention one above another as I believe everyone has something valuable to offer, specifically within context of their world, language and culture.

Having said that, I particularly enjoyed having learned some science lessons on the beat of rap music. That inspired me to teach neuro-agility (roughly translated as the neuroscience of brain fitness) on the beat of music, which I call the Brain Boogie. It has become one of my signature keynotes and the one I enjoy presenting most.

What's next in your career?

Neuro-agility is a construct whose time has come. It is a core competence necessary for learning organisations who want to select, develop and optimise top talent that will position them to perform well and be competitive in disruptive markets and challenging conditions. I have developed a neuro-agility profile and performance optimisation system that assesses the drivers that optimise brain performance and the neurophysiological components of learning and thinking. Over the coming years, I will be assisting organisations across the globe to integrate these tools into their talent development and performance systems, while doing ongoing research and improvements. That ought to keep me out of mischief for a while! 

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PLAYING TO WIN

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