

Jonathan Wilson

CEO at Soul Systems

Toronto, Canada, ON, CA

Inspiring & leading edge content how to lead large-scale transformation, drawn from life and work among tribes, warlords and executives.

Biography

Jonathan Wilson, founder of consulting firm Soul Systems, blends learning from remote tribes, corporate boardrooms and political conflicts to support difference-making leaders. Professional Background: Jonathan's unique background consists of many adventures and misadventures over four decades spent in South East Asia, Africa, Europe and North America: among remote tribes in New Guinea, warring political groups in South Africa and the boardrooms of the corporate world. He has senior executive and consulting experience and has worked in leadership training, organizational development, and multi-stakeholder processes, including political mediation in conflict zones mired in violence. Through Soul Systems, Jonathan works as an advisor and consultant on leadership and strategy to senior executives and their teams. His work includes leadership coaching and development for individuals and teams; business model design; strategy development; and developing real and virtual systems for effective collaboration. He is experienced in multi- and cross-cultural settings, and has academic and in-depth practical knowledge of western and non-western cultures. He is also experienced in working with diverse sectors, from grass-roots communities to government, and with for-profit and non-profit organizations. Jonathan is a seasoned public speaker and published writer, and publishes monthly articles (some of which are required reading in university courses) on his blog: www.soulsystems.ca/blog. Public Speaking: Jonathan Wilson is a highly experienced and dynamic speaker who brings to his audiences deep and practical insights into organizational strategy and leadership, along with other topics. He is a gifted storyteller and draws on a wealth of fascinating and dramatic stories from his adventures around the globe. Audiences value both his big-picture insights into organizational effectiveness and his sensitivity to the deeply personal experiences of leaders - for leaders exist in a world of constraints. Keynotes and workshops are customized to the audience and can be delivered in any setting, small or large. Jonathan has spoken before political and business leaders and members of the public with attendances ranging from a select few to thousands. Presentations can include Jonathan's acclaimed photographs from some remarkable places around the world.

Availability

Keynote, Moderator, Panelist, Workshop, Corporate Training

Industry Expertise

Management Consulting, Professional Training and Coaching, Corporate Leadership

Areas of Expertise

Team, Purpose, Strategy, Culture, Capitalism, Value Creation, Conflict Transformation, Change, Transformational Change, Leadership, Organizational Soul, Collaboration

Sample Talks

Survivor: Leading Your Tribe to Success in the Corporate Jungle

Pressured by quarterlies, leaders are frequently tempted to bypass four building blocks essential to producing exponential results. Jonathan weaves together tested leadership principles with gripping stories from both jungle and boardroom which prove that exponential results are achieved by leaders who learn how to source, focus, energize and harness organizational power. Applications: executive and team leadership, strategy, change

Leadership that Lasts

In leadership, nothing is ideal. Between the vision in the valley and the mountain top of achievement lies a long journey marked by constraint: from inadequate resources to opposition to personal failure. Drawing on the amazing stories of leaders, including personal friends, who made a transformative difference in the corporate, social and political worlds, Jonathan explains what it takes to become someone whose leadership makes a difference that lasts. Applications: leadership, transformation

Trust is Sticky: Generate, Strengthen, & Accelerate Your Business

Trust takes any business relationship (and the transactions that go with it) to a dramatic new level of performance. With both colleagues and customers, trust is the glue of loyalty and the accelerant for innovation and efficiency - in other words, money saved and money made. Insights stem from Jonathan's years of experience in tribal communities, among warlords and in the boardrooms of Fortune 500s. Application: virtual and real collaboration, multi-stakeholder processes, team leadership

Leadership Beyond the Bottom Line

Profit makes for a healthy goal, but a weak purpose. The self-serving company ultimately fails. Working initially from examples of measurable value destruction in both business and larger socio-economic systems such as Apartheid, Jonathan develops a compelling case that sustainable business success can only be derived from a morally substantive purpose that in turns delivers superior, lasting value to the customer and the customer's ecosystem. Applications: capitalism, CSR, strategy

Your Custom Requirement

The greatest value is created when I am able to deliver a keynote or other presentation that speaks precisely to the needs and priorities of an audience. Within my range of specialty interests, I can design and taylor a presentation or keynote to fit your requirements, which will result in a highly engaged audience more likely to apply what they learn. For topic ideas, go to my blog: www.soulsystems.ca/blog.

Education

Accomplishments

CEO, Soul Systems | Leadership, strategy & collaboration advisor to executives and management teams

Past breakthroughs for clients include: *Enabled Fortune 500's unit to move in eight months from a 57% to an 88% score in management effectiveness and 31% to 70% in engagement. *Enabled energy company to increase strategic focus & increase revenue growth by 10% *Equipped historic Canadian not-for-profit to improve cost efficiencies by 12%. *Facilitated transformation of damaged executive team relationships. *Competing supply-chain companies now collaborate on key industry priorities.

Ascent Leadership Development Program

Collaborated with a number of top-class consultants and designed a 6 month leader development process for South African leaders, called Ascent. It employed adult learning methodology and serviced leaders in the business, church and government sectors. Ascent intake multiplied exponentially between 2001-2003, after which Jonathan was promoted to an international role in the organization. "A tremendous learning experience that has broadened [me and] taught me much about leadership."

Director, Africa Leadership Development Institute | EVP, Leadership Development, African Enterprise

As a member of the international executive, participated in the leadership and management of the organization's global operations (four continents). Gave on-site and virtual leadership to all internal and external leadership development initiatives conducted by our ten national offices in the African continent. Developed services to African leaders in training, consulting and written resources. Sourced project capital from civic and commercial sectors in Africa, Europe and N America.

Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives in South Africa

Managed or assisted in various major multi-stakeholder initiatives, e.g.: *Richmond Peace Process - liaising, often in complete secret, with political leaders engaged in violent conflict, and conducting backroom negotiations in order to seek their agreement to a peace process; running a high-stakes dialogue encounter; managing ongoing peace process. *Bringing business, community and government leaders together to developed shared objectives for their city.

Survived

Survived: *Death by execution at the hands of guerrillas in the Philippines. *Death by earthquake in New Guinea. *A government overthrow. *Death by tropical illness. *Adrift on the ocean in an outrigger canoe, without engine or sail power. *Capsized in rapids blocked by fallen tree.

Other Adventures

*Raced competitively in mountain biking and road cycling for eight years. *Climbed mountains and explored valleys in New Guinea rarely or never seen by the outside world. *Explored the beautiful nooks and crannies of some of South Africa's highest and remotest regions. *Explored jungle-grown World War II battlegrounds in New Guinea and the Philippines and discovered forgotten bunkers and gun emplacements as well as old weapons, bullets, and other equipment, US and Japanese.

Published Writing

*Publish monthly articles on leadership via blog (www.soulsystems.ca/blog): some articles are required reading for under-graduate and doctoral leadership courses. *Leadership Letter, published monthly in South Africa in 2004-2005. *A series of articles on national values commissioned by Mass Media Project for a nationwide multimedia social-change campaign in South Africa. *Articles published or reprinted by Canadian Supply Chain Sector Council and MM&D, a Rogers publication.

Testimonials

Robert Walesa

Jonathan was a very big part of a key customer event held in the Dominican Republic this year. His keynote addresses helped make this event one of the highest rated by our customers. Many of our customers were taken away by his background and commented on his ability to provide pragmatic and very usable approaches to help their business strategies.

Aaron Lalvani

Jonathan recently spoke at my Retail Trade Advantage breakfast where a group of retail related industry executives heard him speak about leadership. The title was "Survivor: Leading your Tribe to Success in the Corporate Jungle". Jonathan's experiences in New Guinea and South Africa were masterfully weaved into his presentation about how executives need to understand their "purpose" and what makes up their "soul" as a sustainable business entity. I received only positive comments including one attendee who said she left feeling inspired.

Carmine Domanico

Jonathan was our keynote speaker at our HR Association Annual General meeting this year and he made an outstanding presentation to our members on leadership in the corporate jungle. He eloquently spoke about his life long experiences in South East Asia, Africa, Europe and North America and how the lessons learned can enable us to be better leaders in our own organizations. I would highly recommend Jonathan to anyone looking for insights into leadership, culture from a global view.

Mike Drolet

I was blown away by Jonathan Wilson's ability to captivate an audience. He took his far-reaching experience and turned a fascinating tale into why company culture matters. And the message he delivered was clear ? you might lack leadership now, but it's never too late to turn your company around. He left our event buzzing.

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