

The Startup Survival Podcast by Peter Harrington

Series 2 Get Better, Go Further

Transcript: Episode 14 – Perfect Presenting



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Speaker 1 ([00:11](#)):

Hello and welcome. And thank you once more for joining me, Peter Harrington on the Startup Survival Podcast. Whether you are a liker, lover or loather, presenting and pitching is a key thread in the rich tapestry of entrepreneurial life. Fortunately for me, my university tutor, the quite remarkable honorary fellow Romano Zavaroni designed all our management courses. So students continuously presented and critiqued one another's work. Whilst wonderful memories of Romano's flipped classroom learning take me back to the late eighties, it was in the nineties that I first met this show's special guest. Leeds-based, Alex Simmons is a highly experienced DJ, radio, as well as TV show host. Alex is also an experienced entrepreneur and has presented at many prestigious events. Only the other week he spoke at Wembley stadium and last year he was on the Black Lives Matter stage in front of 20,000 people in London's Hyde Park. So you'll appreciate. I was delighted when Alex found a slot in his busy diary and agreed to be part of this ever so slightly smaller show.

Speaker 1 ([01:33](#)):

Now, before Alex joins us let's take a moment to consider why being able to pitch and present effectively is such an important skill for entrepreneurs to master. Many startups engage in pitching competitions and investor pitches months before their business even gets off the ground. Post-Launch entrepreneurs are often involved in sales pitches and later staff presentations. At any presentation entrepreneurs must lead with their ideas. And the goal is typically to influence and persuade others to take a desired action. Good leaders, good presenters, generate followers to win people over in their hearts, as well as their heads. Presenters must craft succinct messages, clarity, coherence, and research backed content builds confidence as well as trust. Knowing what to say is as important as knowing what not to say, then there is tone pace and style, and these issues always require careful tuning in line with different audience preferences. Presenting well is a challenge. And many people dread the prospect of talking in public. And as a result, many avoid the perceived nerve-wracking painful ordeal. But if you fear stage fright or not getting it quite right, then this podcast is for you. What Alex is about to share will help and hopefully inspire possibly beyond all expectations.

Speaker 1 ([03:11](#)):

Alex Simmons is a communication and presentation specialist. He's honed his skills over many years and has presented to thousands upon thousands of people all over the world. Always in demand and with a unique journey, that's taken him from chancy clubs to celebrated stadiums, Alex is the perfect guest for this episode. So without further ado, Alex Simmons, welcome to the Startup Survival Podcast.

Speaker 2 ([03:41](#)):

Thanks Peter. It's a pleasure to be here and I'm hoping over the next half an hour or so, I can share some of my experience and maybe leave a few tips for people to become better presenters because it can be learned without a doubt.

Speaker 1 ([03:56](#)):

Alex, listeners should know we first met 22 years ago at the Young Enterprise national finals held at the Savoy Hotel in London. HSBC's CEO had just presented and then you stepped up and completely blew the 500 strong audience away with your highly engaging delivery and clarity of message. Just how old were you back then, Alex?

Speaker 2 ([04:21](#)):

I was a mere 17 years young and I don't, I remember being I don't remember exactly what I said. I remember having an amazing experience at Young Enterprise.

Speaker 1 ([04:34](#)):

If I can just give people some context, all presenters that evening used scripts and all received mild rounds of applause once their words wound up. But you were so different. I was sat at a table at the back and I remember people looking at each other, their mouths agape. People were captivated. You engaged the room like no one else. How do you think you did that?

Speaker 2 ([04:59](#)):

I think the first thing that I always say is speak from the heart because I spoke about my experience, my experience of life, my experience, if you land surprise at the time and because I'd had such a great journey with Young Enterprise. I had so much passion for the project that it literally saved my life. God knows where I'd be. Now. If I hadn't started my own business at 16 years old, it has shaped who I am today, who I've become. I had raw ability, but I had no direction. I had some good people in my life and some questionable people in my life, but going into that environment and understanding that as a young man, who probably was from a tough area with little opportunity in certain aspects, it opened my eyes to the opportunities of business, of picking the right choice and, and also working hard.

Speaker 2 ([06:01](#)):

I've worked really, really hard at Young Enterprise. I'd got it wrong. I'd made mistakes, I'd lost money, but I'd worked hard. And the actual value was in the experience and the failure, the failure was the value and talking about that because I'd lived it at what, in those shoes. I just found it quite funny to remember and just recite some of the mistakes I've made. And I think people, people had obviously been there. Everyone's been through that journey. You know, when we make mistakes, it's you, if you don't laugh you'd cry. I, I really believe that. And there's nothing wrong with talking about your experiences. And some of the most successful podcasts are the ones where people talk about the failures because we warm to those people. And I, as a young kid, I didn't realize what I was doing at the time. I never had any training. I just got up and

spoke from the heart because I'd had such a great journey. And it really was the start of a career that I had a lot more failures of, of so many mistakes, so much learning. And I'm still learning today.

Speaker 1 ([07:16](#)):

Now, Alex, you've shared how Young Enterprise introduced you to business and delivering presentations. And over the last 20 years, you've also gone on to host your own radio and TV shows and have presented to huge audiences. As a professional DJ, in your opinion, are excellent presenters born or made?

Speaker 2 ([07:37](#)):

I was a confident kid who was great at talking to my friends, talking to people. I never had any hangups. Presenting is very different. Presenting is an art that some people might find it easier to just talk in front of people, but it doesn't mean just because you're confident you can do it well. To do it well, it's all about practice. It's all about training. It's all about, you know, research insight. There's so many factors to becoming a good presenter and it is 100% I would say down to hard work over talent. Talent is based on confidence. And if you've got a naturally good voice, I've, I've got a very thick Yorkshire accent. I'm a proper Yorkshireman. A lot of now I'm talking now in this mic with a radio voice, which I've honed over years and years. And I like to keep a bit of my Yorkshire accent with also being able to speak clearly so anybody can understand me. Now that's taken years now, anyone out there, please, please, please. Don't be thinking that I'm any kind of finished article because I'm still on the journey. If you're just starting out, if wanting to become a presenter, believe me, you can do it through hard work and practice.

Speaker 1 ([09:02](#)):

Okay, now you mentioned the word journey and practice. Alex to help listeners understand what you mean, I'd like to explore your history in a little more detail and how you've learned and changed through hard work. So going back, am I right in thinking that you went onto backup your Savoy presentation skills with some music industry training?

Speaker 2 ([09:24](#)):

I'd met a guy called 'Fish' who got in touch with me. I was running under 17 nights. I'd gone along there to take some photos for an online magazine that was working out. And he threw me on stage. He saw me as a guy who, who had a bit about him, take the photos on stage, which then went into, grab a mic and say a few words. And I just, I just got up there and spoke. And I was running games with, with kids. I was a young kid myself, and he just saw me as a real project. He then one night it stopped volunteering. As I'll never forget, it stopped volunteering as the DJ didn't turn up. And fish said to me, here's the list of tunes, his, ah, they all do. You need to play him in. You need to speak between every tune I've seen you on a Mikey can use it like a DJ that night for the very first time to a two and a half thousand people never done it in my life. And he said, afterwards, you could be a DJ. I really enjoyed it. There's such a buzz. See, and people's reactions to music and getting on the mic in between. It was like an old school, no mixing kind of DJ. And, and I enjoyed it. And that was the first step to becoming a DJ and having that mindset of this could be a career.

Speaker 1 ([10:43](#)):

Okay. So presenting to thousands of people meant you were getting phenomenal experience from a very young age. As you played more and more nights, did you feel you were becoming the finished article?

Speaker 2 ([10:55](#)):

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I was a million miles away from the finished article. I was winging it as best I could smiling my way through and working really, really hard. I'm aware as soon as I'd got the opportunity bought myself some decks. I borrowed some money and I started to practice, practice, practice, and Fish showed me a few techniques that assured me to become a better talker on the microphone. And that suddenly catapulted to me one day, he came to me and said, right, you're now going to be ready. You're going to take over my Friday night. So Fish DJ'ed at one of the roughest clubs in Leeds. Harvey's on a Friday night. And he said, y'all taking over your the new resident. So I was a volunteer at this point and I went along and DJ'd at this club and I can only describe it as being dropped in the middle of the jungle. And it's feeding time like lions and tigers are out there. They're hungry to eat. You've got all these people who are used to Fish, the legend DJ. And from every Friday, next minute, I'm there. I've had a few months experience, not a very good DJ whatsoever. And it was hell on earth.

Speaker 1 ([12:10](#)):

So I'm sensing Alex things didn't go well?

Speaker 2 ([12:15](#)):

Absolute car crash. Five weeks in, honestly I turned and said fish. I love doing the kids' nights. Thanks for the opportunity for DJing. Bearing in mind. I'm not old enough to be in the clubs. I'm still just before my 18th birthday. And I'm like, really appreciate the opportunity. I can't do it anymore. I'm not good enough. I'm getting loads of grief. People are abusive, hurling, like saying all sorts of stuff to me. And I'm a volunteer. I don't need this at all. And I, I didn't genuinely think I was cut out for it at all. I thought it, I was, were, were out of my depth. And as soon as the weirdest thing happened, because as soon as I told him that I wasn't going to do it. I says, he turned around and said, thank you for your honesty. Do two more weeks while I find somebody else to replace you. I said, no worries. I had that much respect for him. I didn't quit. And I think that's really important. I look back and that decision not to quit and to do the two weeks out of respect, changed my life, because it would have been so easy to say I'm quitting. I can't do it.

Speaker 1 ([13:32](#)):

So, so you did five weeks and agreed to finish with two more. What happened next?

Speaker 2 ([13:38](#)):

Because I told Fish that I couldn't do it anymore. I couldn't physically, it was too difficult. And it was like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I had five weeks of hell coping with these idiots who abused me. The second I told him, I said, I'll do two more weeks. I went in that for that sixth week. Totally relaxed because I had no, I knew I was quitting. I knew it didn't matter what happened in those two weeks because I would never going to do it.

Speaker 1 ([13:58](#)):

And how did that sixth night go the night?

Speaker 2 ([14:02](#)):

Because I was relaxed. I just, I didn't care. I didn't have any anxiety about the fear of being the last, the last few weeks at carried a lot of anxiety. And as soon as I'd let that go, it allowed me to perform. And the night flew, it went really well.

Speaker 2 ([14:31](#)):

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I thought it must be just, I didn't think about it. And I went the week after and I really enjoyed it. And I told Fish, I says, I can be a DJ. I can do this. I just needed that little bit of confidence in the thing. What I learned in that experience was you have to give things time. It won't happen straight away. Don't worry if it doesn't go right the first time, keep at it, because it will take a few weeks, maybe a few months to get, to find your feet in any situation.

Speaker 1 ([15:05](#)):

Okay. Being a DJ was clearly school of hard knocks, but you persevered gave it time and learned. But you didn't stop there because you went on to work in the media. Can you share a bit more about this part of your journey?

Speaker 2 ([15:21](#)):

Thanks to Fish, I was taught at a very young age. The microphone is as important as the music. So your words are as powerful as the music, how you stand in front of people, how you hold an audience, how you relate to people in front of you is as powerful as any song that is ever played. Sometimes more powerful because you're speaking from the heart. I learned a very young age and that really catapulted me into first of all, pirate radio. So pirate radio underground, raw emotive, real cutting edge, you're dealing with people is it's professionally unprofessionally. If that makes sense, because you are always on like the cusp of what's what's happening now is, is really current. And I love that about pirate radio, and it's people engage in people, finding your people, discovering you. So you, you, part of this ever-growing as you only my twenties, and at the same time, I'm out in clubs. So it's all about presenting. Whether I'm on radio, whether I'm in clubs is all about honing those skills that are allowing me to become a better presenter. It's given yourself time on a mic.

Speaker 1 ([16:49](#)):

And now the work you are describing is all about Alex Simmons, the entrepreneur?

Speaker 2 ([16:56](#)):

That's one thing I would advocate to every single person is people will not just give you opportunities in life. Those days are long gone. They're very, very few and far between if you have a vision of what you want to become, if you want to become a DJ or a presenter or a radio host, try your best to carve your own opportunity out, because that will give you the, the time you need to become very good at it.

Speaker 1 ([17:25](#)):

So moving on from radio, you progressed to television where you presented your own rugby league show, rugby AM to even bigger audiences. Clearly you've honed your skills and style, but what did TV teach you about standing up in front of others?

Speaker 2 ([17:42](#)):

First of all, the camera adds 10 pounds or more. So you're looking at yourself very differently. I've been, as a young person suffered a serious knee injury in my early twenties and literally drunk and ate my way through my twenties as a DJ radio host, not really looking at myself in the mirror. Again, you probably put in a little bit of where it's on now, and that's one thing that's really important about presenting is how you look and feel gives you more confidence. Now, once one person once said to me in Australia a top Startup Survival Podcast - Copyright 2021 Peter Harrington

presenter guy called Ryan, I actually named my child bull after him, because he gave me so much good advice. He said, if you want to work in professional sport, you've got to look like you were in professional sport. And that was a very kind way of saying, fix up, get yourself in shape.

Speaker 2 ([18:32](#)):

He knew I had all the talent. What was holding me back at that point was probably a little bit of professionalism. And the look, the look look of Alex Simmons. And that was a real it's a tough conversation for people to have, but it's important that I say it now because it's part of my journey. And you have to, if you want to become the best version of yourself, you have to sometimes take a long, hard look in the mirror and realize as you move from a platform like radio to a completely relatable, but very different platform like TV there's tweaks, you have to make that a more difficult because you are judged by more people and prejudged. And that's the one thing that you have to be strong to, to deal with. But you also, the experience you've got over years and years and years will allow you to deal with that kind of judgment and focus.

Speaker 1 ([19:32](#)):

People who tune into your shows would probably see you as a highly professional presenter. But when you look back, do you see that person?

Speaker 2 ([19:41](#)):

My journey was difficult because I was going from being a top professional DJ. So I was in environments that weren't conducive to being a radio presenter and a TV presenter, and to grow into the right kind of shoes and to go from DJing, which is an environment of partying, drinking, being here, there, and everywhere, late nights. TV presenting and radio presenting is early mornings professional. It's a different tone. It's a completely different audience. And the people around you expect to very different things. To mix the two and to take that journey was the biggest part of my personal development and growth. And it was, I am the person I am today because I moved from the nightclubs into professional sport because you become a professional. And that journey was the biggest value for me. Just professionalizing myself.

Speaker 1 ([20:40](#)):

Okay. So what did you discover you had to change in order to become the professional television presenter?

Speaker 2 ([20:46](#)):

It was so bad. I was so bad. The first few TV shows I look back on now, and I'm so bad compared to being this amazing DJ great radio horse, because I've done it a million times, done the breakfast show for like four years on TV. You're not looking at the camera. You're looking at the wrong camera. You are, I'm stuttering. You're not focused because everything's on screen. So the viewer sees everything so that some of the awful habits that I'd created on radio, when people can't see you, all of a sudden, I'm watching thinking, do I do that? Oh my God, I do that. Oh my God, I'm dying.

Speaker 1 ([21:30](#)):

So there's, there's no hiding place. There's no hiding place?

Speaker 2 ([21:33](#)):

There's no hiding place whatsoever on TV. And you have to retrain your whole brain. You have to be really super harsh with yourself. And if you want to move up the levels, if you want to get onto the next channel, if you want to be better, you've got to make big changes and quickly because TV is cut-throat. There's no room for failure. There's no room for you. You have a better, or you out.

Speaker 1 ([22:07](#)):

Alex has shared 20 years of his life in about the same number of minutes. And I'm keen to learn more about his work as an entrepreneur, as well as his presentation at the Black Lives Matter Event, I mentioned earlier. But before we do, there are a couple of his communication points I want to draw out a little further. In my experience, people avoid or get nervous about presentations because they, they feel rambling or forgetting their words. And there are two ways around these problems. If you can. I strongly recommend you get the book 'Perfect Pitch' by John Steel a master of pitching. John emphasizes the value of writing and learning a script. So you hardwire words into your memory systems. People who do this, find it much easier to relax during a presentation because they can communicate with an audience almost in autopilot mode. But scripting is a lot of hard work.

Speaker 1 ([23:03](#)):

Fortunately for us, when talking about his Young Enterprise presentation, Alex offered a shortcut route to success, and it goes something like this. When you storify information, talk about your experience and how things made you feel you are, as Alex said, speaking from the heart, whether it was funny, terrifying, fascinating, or inspiring emotions will underpin your messages. And when delivered appropriately audiences love heartfelt communication. Interestingly, our bodies' emotional story content, isn't housed in the heart, but in the brains limbic system. We don't have to learn this kind of material. The information is there, ready for us to retrieve whenever we want. By contrast, if you decide to present logical, cold, hard data and factual information, you have to fire up and rely on the standard memory systems, typically residing in the brain's prefrontal cortex. Information housed in this part of the mind is much harder to retrieve. So to get around this problem, presenters often make the big mistake of creating and using slides drowning in text. Whilst presenters may love reading text-heavy slides, audiences typically find them dull and confusing and quickly switch off. Yet the most important people in any presentation are those people in the audience.

Speaker 1 ([24:43](#)):

If you remain unconvinced about the power of your limbic system, go and try out this exercise on your own or with a critical friend you can trust. Simply talk about a really happy event in your life or something that scared or fascinated. You you'll find. You won't need any notes. And you'll speak with eloquence, passion and poise.

So let's get back to Alex so he can share some presentation top tips and fundamentals in a bit more detail. Alex, it doesn't matter what environment we find ourselves in our voice is a key part of communication. How important is knowing how to use our voice.

Speaker 2 ([25:30](#)):

Projecting your voice is the key skill when presenting and when, when you first starting to learn to be a presenter, it's how you communicate one-to-one or one-to-many it's about how people listen to your voice when you're stood in front of them and they believe what you say, right? A technique that I was given by Fish back in the day was, and it sounds crazy, but it actually works. The 'Yellow Pages' was a book with all adverts, from different businesses as a kid growing up, and the tip was, Fish said, you have to go through

the Yellow Pages and make it sound interesting. So it might be: "Down at Bob's, grocery store, 3, 2, 1 Leeds Road," and you had to do it in your DJ voice. And the DJ voice back then was accentuated because you are trying to create a character to present. And this is you've got Alex Simmons the person, and back then it was DJ Simmo, DJ Simmo. I went on to be Alex, but DJ Simmo. But then, so who was DJ Simmo? Who is this alter ego? How does he sound? And that's where you hone in. And believe me, when it started out was terrible. But the, the time you put in to the practicing techniques, like the Yellow Pages is where you'll start looking in the mirror, literally stand in a mirror, get your Yellow Pages out in front of you and try and make their business sound, Interesting.

Speaker 1 ([27:14](#)):

You've just mentioned practice there Alex, how valuable is practice for anyone wanting to be a great presenter?

Speaker 2 ([27:22](#)):

It is everything. There's no out of every, every tip I will give you practice is the one thing that will turn you from an enthusiast into a great presenter. Somebody who has an idea of being a great presenter, to somebody who will become a great presenter. And there's the 10,000 hours theory where if you practice something and you're for 10,000 hours, you become an expert. I like an alternative one. There's actually, I've been involved with professional rugby league and I was 80 minutes in a game. And in a week there's 10,080 minutes. And how you spend those 10,000 minutes is directly related to how you perform in those 80.

Speaker 1 ([28:09](#)):

Linked to practice is the issue of preparation. Do you have any preparation tips?

Speaker 2 ([28:15](#)):

Mental, physical is so important because if you are mentally right, physically, right. So you've had the sleep sleep. I cannot tell you how important sleep is before you present. Make sure you get an early night, make sure you get some food in your, so you've got some energy. All these things will take away the nerves, but go into detail, know the people you're going to present.

Speaker 1 ([28:43](#)):

That's great. Now your answer brings me nicely onto the next subject. Something which has been mentioned a few times already. How important is it for people to research and know their audience?

Speaker 2 ([28:57](#)):

Knowing the audience is key, whether you're. If I'm presenting to a room full of kids you take yourself to their level. You need to be relatable, so relations and the making the, your voice, your introduction relatable. So if you're presenting to a room of I don't know, 40 year old women about a conference or whatever, it might be, walk into Whitney Houston, walk into a tune. They're all gonna know. They're all gonna sing along to and put a bit of walking music, get them singing along, get them comfortable, getting ready to listen to you and be prepared. And it's all about knowing the audience. And one little tip I can give you. We're in Facebook world. We're in LinkedIn world. I presented to a big organization and I'd been given the list of the people. I was presenting to. So I went onto their website.

Speaker 2 ([29:53](#)):

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I found them and there was bio's on there. And one of the guys I was presenting to was a massive Northern Soul fan. And I had to produce a video about the subject I was trying to get over the line, which was a big piece of work. A couple of years of worth of work. And I had, I knew an, a massively famous Northern soul DJ from my DJ world. So I walk in the room to present. I put my video up. I know that the content is right, because I've done the research into the people I'm presenting to. Two women and a man. The women are great, really open. Fantastic. I find it really easy to communicate women cause normally they are better communicators he wasn't interested whatsoever. The second he saw this Northern Soul DJ, it was computer on, it was in the room. It was engaged. The preparation I done for that meeting made sure I won that pitch.

Speaker 1 ([31:00](#)):

That's a great story, Alex. And as you spoke, I realized there was something else I wanted to get your opinion on. You mentioned projecting your voice earlier, but how important is the issue of tone?

Speaker 2 ([31:14](#)):

Tone is the difference between people believing you and people buying into you. Two very different things. People can believe and like you, but to buy in, they have to be ready to walk the path with you. Tone gets you there. Tone is understanding when you, when you understand your audience, sometimes you speak softer because you really want to draw them into listen. Sometimes you confident and you project because you know that you're right. And they're going to be in this with you. They want to be excited. So you start talking like this, you've got your hand gestures. You, you can be open and open your arms up all. You can really softly draw them in. And you've got to know the right person for the right tone.

Speaker 1 ([32:13](#)):

Yes. That makes complete sense. Alex. Now offer, you said how working and understanding an audience as a DJ, for example, also involved another type of tone. Can you say a bit more about this?

Speaker 2 ([32:27](#)):

Peaks and troughs? Everything is peaks and troughs. When you are presenting, you're taking people on a journey. You can't just go at one level all the time. You've got to use the events of the presentation. You've got to slow it down in places. You've got to speed it up in places. You got to get them high. You've got to get them low. You've got to bring them in to your vision and you've got to make them feel, feel it, to make them feel it they've got to go up and down with you. They've got to ride the wave when they are riding the wave. And you know, because you get to a place of flow. When you're in flow, flow is a really, really hard thing to achieve is, some days you just know. I've done DJ sets. You're not thinking about it. You just go in through it. You live in, in a moment of total flow and you don't realize you as in it until the end and you only ever get in it by getting all the little bits right first. And then you're into flow.

Speaker 1 ([33:37](#)):

Flow yes. Completely endorsed what you were saying there and another small, but oh, so important point I want your take on Alex is the use of the pause or rather silence.

Speaker 2 ([33:50](#)):

Silence. The old adage is silence is golden. I never understood that until I had difficult conversations, difficult conversations away. Speaking about subjects that are close to people's heart that are really tough

to talk about. I became a diversity expert over the years, diversity being a head of diversity for a large organization, you have to have some really difficult conversations and silence allows people to fill in the blanks. So you'll, you purposely leave a pause when you want people to think about their reaction and their feelings to the subject matter. Because when people fill in their own blanks, it draws them in to the conversation. And you've got to use it the right length without you losing the flow of conversation. You've got to know how long to pause for and when to do it. And it's all about practice.

Speaker 1 ([34:57](#)):

The way you made that point was excellent. You've brought so many of the component, parts of top quality presenting to life and demonstrated how people can use them to best effect. You've also just mentioned that Alex, your work with diversity and I want to come on to that, but before I do, can we explore a couple of final points as I'm keen to get your thoughts on the issues of structure and time.

Speaker 2 ([35:22](#)):

Having a structure is an, a plan and a vision and ultimately a call to action. Without those things, you're just a waffler. You just, somebody who's going to go out and just chat without any direction or any purpose. To plan an idea without a plan is just a dream. You have to have a very clear structure of where you want the conversation to go, because you will sometimes when you're speaking to people, especially with kids, you can go off on a tangent. People can speak over you. Anything can go wrong. The mic can fail. Anything can happen. Without a plan, without a structure. You've got a point to get back to, to start again, to feel comfortable and to give you that security that you can always rescue the situation.

Speaker 1 ([36:18](#)):

That's. That's great, Alex. And finally, why for you is the issue of time so important?

Speaker 2 ([36:25](#)):

I think time's really important because 'A', you have to take your time. It, it takes years, years, and years to refine the skills to be a good presenter. Please don't think it's going to happen overnight. Enjoy the journey and take your time. Put the time in really put the time in. If you want to be great at it, practice, practice, practice. And for me personally, one of the first things you asked me was, do I get nervous? And I said, no. And that might be because I've never really suffered with nerves. And I can put that down to my philosophy on time and just hear me out, Pete, we've been speaking for an hour and this'll be edited down to 30 minutes. I understand that. But in that hour it will be over in an hour. So I know whenever I go into any situation, whether it's a pitch, whether it's on stage at Wembley, whether it, wherever it is, I know that in X amount of time it will be over. So I don't worry about, I don't let the anxiety come into it. I think, well, it's over in an hour anyway. So I'm just going to do the best I can do in the hour. I don't let fear be my master, I let time be my master. If that makes sense.

Speaker 1 ([37:44](#)):

Well, Alex, as with so many guests, I have learned as I have listened, it's been a real treat to be able to spend time with you. But before we go, I mentioned earlier that you spoke at the Black Lives Matter event in 2020 in Hyde Park. Can you share a little bit more about that experience?

Speaker 2 ([38:04](#)):

George Floyd died on the 25th of May really tough for any person of colour it through so many feelings at the time and working day-to-day in diversity. So it really fell on my toes, especially being the operations director of Jamaica Rugby League, which is the only all bot team in the world. So there was a lot of anxiety, a lot of issues within the team and how they felt. And around that time, and I was invited to speak Black Lives Matter. 20,000 people in Hyde Park, some of the greatest speakers around on the day, I was given a 10 minute slot and ended up being on stage for 25 minutes. And the difficult thing that I had on that day was I was following some great speakers. Arthur France MBE arguably the most influential, important black person in the history of Leeds. He bought the carnival to Leeds.

Speaker 2 ([39:07](#)):

He changed the culture and the fabric of a city. He comes on stage, militant, talking facts, hard facts, everyone respects and loves Arthur France. Everyone's on board with him straightaway. He's followed by Khadija Ibrahim one of the most talented artists and poets. She comes on and these people are giving me lessons in presenting before I have to follow them. Arthur France talks about, it's a lesson in being direct, being strong. How believe in your opinion, amazing lesson in how to present. Khadija Ibrahim comes up and reads a passage, a poem that she'd written. Succinct. She did not waste a breath, not one word, every single word it had impact. It was a masterclass in 10 minutes of less. It was five minutes of beauty. And she had every single person bought in. Chris Purdy MBE, the youngest guy to get an MBE ever. He comes on stage is this little guy, but he's a professional speaker.

Speaker 2 ([40:20](#)):

He, he goes around the world, speaking on really difficult conversations around race. He's an amazing speaker. He goes up right before me. 20,000 people stands on stage does not say one word just raises his fist 20,000 and people raise the fist and I'm like. That's so good. It's just, he just for every single person together, he had everyone's attention. And as you see the see of fists, just going up from front to back back, you like this guy is this guy sick. And he just nailed it, nailed it. He was really imaginative. It was, it was fire on stage. And I had to follow. The difference was for me is I had a call to action. Nobody else did. They were all speaking from the heart about experience and opinion. I had to get on stage and speak about how we felt as a team and how we were going to support the community.

Speaker 2 ([41:31](#)):

But we also had to tell them that Jamaica were playing the world cup and it's an opportunity for them to get behind the team. And it's really important that as a community, as a people, we come together and support each other. And I had a call to action. So you can't miss an opportunity to sell. You cannot miss the opportunity to bring people together and to get them on board with your journey. And even at the most difficult time the hardest conversation, you have to find a way to bring people together in the right way and share your story, it's all about how you share your story.

Speaker 1 ([42:18](#)):

Great story and what a way to conclude our time together. I am so grateful. You agreed to be part of this show. And I know so many listeners will really appreciate your insights. But sadly we're out of time. Thank you for being such a great guest.

Speaker 2 ([42:37](#)):

Thank you so much for having me. I love the series and many blessings and continued love for you and your family Pete, look after yourself.

Speaker 1 ([42:51](#)):

Well, that was Alex Simmons, presenter and communicator extraordinaire. Now, if you are a keen listener, you will have picked up on the fact. I forgot to ask Alex for his book recommendation. If you remember, I'm now supposed to task my guests with this responsibility. Anyhow, I went back to Alex and sought a suggestion and he thought for a moment, and then he recommended the Yellow Pages or any business directory. Get people to practice using their voices he said, so that even the dullest information can sound interesting. That was a recommendation I never saw coming, but I do see the final moments of this episode edging into view and as such, we must prepare our departures. But before that happens, Alex, huge thanks for sharing your extensive experience, advice and stories here on the Startup Survival Podcast. I am so pleased. I met you all those years ago at the Young Enterprise finals in London.

Speaker 1 ([43:57](#)):

And thank you to Duncan my producer, Chris, for your research and thumbs up to the music sponsors Seajam Moths. Then there's LJ at the London school of economics, as well as the SIM venture team who allow me time out to do this in the final episode of this series to be published on Thursday, the 9th of September, my holiday calls, I'll be talking to someone who's experienced the entrepreneurial journey from multiple perspectives. Jane Murray, who is an entrepreneur, investor and mentor as well as a wonderful human being will be joining me to help you think through your entrepreneurial future. If you seek guidance as to where you are headed on your journey, this finale is not to be missed. Until then. your podcast feedback is not just welcomed. It's needed. Share what you really like. And let me know the truth about what needs to be improved. And of course, whatever your listening channel of preference, please remember to rate, review and subscribe. So until we reunite for the very last time in this series, let me say my goodbyes. My name's Peter Harrington, and this has been your Startup Survival Podcast. Go well, stay safe and thank you.