

Warwick John Fahy has lived in Asia for over ten years, working to help companies develop their talent resources and delivering motivational speeches. So what are his favourite words of wisdom?

[interview]

Warwick John Fahy

GENERAL MANAGER, CHINA
TEAMSWORK

BORN:

I was born in London, England in the wonderful monument to 1970s architecture that was Perivale Maternity Hospital. I grew up in Ealing, attending St Benedict's School for Boys. As a child, I enjoyed playing rugby in the winter and cricket in the summer. My Mum was keen for us to have a broad education so I took classes in judo, piano, flute, tennis, and rugby with the London Irish. I went to Leeds University and got a first in my dissertation from the Economics Department. My brothers Wessley and Raphael, and sister Lizzie all still live in London.

FAMOUS FOR?

Connecting and bringing together diverse multicultural groups of people, so that a common vision and passion can be shared. It requires skills in cultural intelligence, facilitating, public speaking, entertaining, and group dynamics. It's a real stretch but immensely rewarding.

In China, I am called the "Godfather of Toastmasters" (or sometimes "Grandfather"!) by the members for my passionate contribution to building public speaking chapters around Shanghai and China. I was elected to the Toastmasters International Hall of Fame in 2007.

As a child I was scared of heights and refused to go up the Eiffel Tower on a school trip. I did a parachute jump in university to get over that fear.

A PERSON OF THE WORLD?

Yes. I love to travel and spent my summer holidays at university taking shoestring trips across Europe by train and flying across the USA in the days when you could buy a one month air pass on Delta Airlines. It only cost about \$200! I have lived in Asia since 1994, with extended placements in Taipei and Shanghai since 2002. I still have the travel bug and have a long list of countries I would love to visit. Next on the list, Laos and Vietnam.

FLUENT IN SHANGHAI THEN?

Not exactly. I can give public speeches in Mandarin and often use Mandarin when I am facilitating off-site teambuilding events. Not being a natural linguist – eight years of studying French in school didn't leave an impression – I was frustrated until I did three things: First, got a private tutor; second, put all my vocabulary onto flash cards so that I could review them in the car; third, started giving

formal occasion speeches. There is nothing like the thought of a crowd to get you focused on learning a few new words! Learning Mandarin is a journey. A long one.

WHAT'S THE STRANGEST THING THAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU HERE?

Given the dynamic and often stressful environment that we live in in China, it's strange that my lifestyle has actually gotten healthier. In 2006, I became a vegetarian and started competing in triathlons. As I was finishing the Half Ironman in Hainan this year in 38 degrees heat, I thought there is no way I would have predicted doing this five years ago.

PASSIONATE ABOUT:

Health, wealth, and contribution. I find that I am most energetic, committed and passionate when I am acting as a catalyst to help people unblock the communication obstacles that are stopping them from sharing their unique talents with the world. Aside from Toastmasters, I also founded the Professional Speakers Association of China, which helps develop experts who speak in Greater China. I am inspired by people who work selflessly on community projects and our company has supported a charity for orphans, Love Without Boundaries, since 2005.

FAVOURITE WORDS OF WISDOM:

"You get what you give" which I first heard from Jack Stack in 'The Great Game of Business'.

HOW'S THE JOB?

Diverse. We help retain and develop talent for multinationals in technology, industrial, and consumer sectors. As a group, we provide consulting, training, and executive coaching services across Asia Pacific and the Middle East, so I will often travel to facilitate programs in other countries.

In China, I conduct communication workshops for managers and coaching programs for senior executives looking to improve their influencing skills. As a certified professional facilitator, I also help managers and leaders to adopt group facilitation skills into their meetings to engage with their staff, increase interaction, and get tangible results from their time together. We are expanding to open offices in Beijing and Guangzhou this year.

TOP TIPS FOR DOING BUSINESS IN CHINA?

Be calm. Get focused. Work hard.

WHERE TO NEXT?

Somewhere with a beach – Dubai, Bali or Sydney – with my lovely wife Rebecca.

