

CATHY O'DOWD



Adventurer
Author and Motivational Speaker

Cathy O'Dowd is the first woman in the world to climb Mount Everest, the world's highest mountain, from both its north and south sides. Her first ascent of Everest happened in the midst of the chaotic events that form the basis of the 'true story' behind the Hollywood movie Everest. Cathy, who grew up in Johannesburg, South Africa, has climbed ever since leaving school.

She was completing her Masters degree in Journalism, while working as university lecturer, when she saw a newspaper advert for a place on the 1st South African Everest Expedition. Six months later she was the first South African to summit Everest. Three years later she became the first woman in the world to climb the mountain from both sides. Finally, she made one last expedition to Everest to try a new route on the Kangshung face.

Cathy has written a book about her Everest experiences, Just For The Love Of It. The years she spent in the Himalaya were for her a degree 'in living'. The insights she discovered about herself, and about individuals and teams under intense stress in the face of overwhelming challenge, are ones she has been sharing with her corporate audiences ever since.

Cathy's stories touch on themes of importance to anyone trying to run successful projects and get the best out of people. Cathy's most challenging Himalayan epic was as part of team forging a new route on an 8000 metre peak. Although Cathy herself did not reach the summit, two of her teammates did, doing the first ascent of Nanga Parbat via the Mazeno ridge, and winning the prestigious Piolet d'Or for their achievement.

She has turned this experience into a fascinating interactive case-study of successful project execution of truly innovative goals. Cathy O'Dowd - the 1st woman to climb Mount Everest from both sides Cathy has been a professional speaker for over 20 years and has presented her message to companies in 45 countries on six continents.

Cathy is a Fellow of the Professional Speaking Association of UK/Ireland, who have given her their highest award, the Professional Speaking Award of Excellence. Cathy is actively involved with charities focused on female empowerment, notably the Rwenzori Women for Health project in Uganda, and the Voice Of Women Foundation in Germany.

She lives in Andorra, in the Pyrenees mountains, from where she pursues her speaking career, and explores the mountains of Europe. In her free time she does technical rock-climbing, canyoning and ski-mountaineering. Her day-to-day adventures as a speaker and mountaineer can be followed on Instagram.

Topics (Selection):

- Adventure
- Leadership
- Teamwork

Publications (Selection):

- Just for the Love of it: The First Woman to Climb Mount Everest from Both Sides, 2000
- Everest: Free To Decide. The story of the 1st South, 1996