



Dr Wendy Sarkissian – Speaking for the Future

SPEAKING FOR THE FUTURE OF ORGANISATIONS

Dr Wendy Sarkissian's corporate presentations encompass three main themes:

- 1) ***The New Spirit at Work: Excellence, Creativity and Happiness***
- 2) ***The Future of Work***
- 3) ***Caring for Nature In Business and the Professions***

Within each of these themes, Wendy addresses a number of specific topics, outlined in the following pages. Clients may request their own topics and even co-design their own workshops, selecting from the range of topics within Wendy's themes.

1) **The New Spirit at Work: Excellence, Creativity & Happiness**

“The real bottom line is... when people feel cared for, connected and know their work has value, they are likely to be more creative and more effective. They care more, they do better work and they stay longer in their jobs.”
Dr Wendy Sarkissian

What's happening to the Australian workplace? It's changing faster than we ever imagined. Current research reveals organisations moving beyond social responsibility to transform their businesses with an infusion of values such as integrity, customer delight, and respect for people, innovation, teamwork and prudent risk-taking. Change is afoot in boardrooms and on factory floors, with workers saying they want influence; they want to be able to discuss their values and they want to make a difference. The benefits of a values-driven organisation are dramatic -- ranging from lower absentee rates to inspired innovations. This strong trend is well documented and some major Australian corporations are taking the lead.

Dr Wendy Sarkissian has run out of wall space to display the forty professional awards her small Australian social planning firm has received in the past 25 years. Staff she mentored now hold senior positions in government and academia in Australia and overseas. She clearly knows how to inspire staff, colleagues and clients and to work effectively with local communities. Wendy shares research into leading practice team development, as well as her own stories of developing and managing multidisciplinary teams of staff and consultants in high-risk planning and development projects in high-conflict contexts.

Topics within this theme:

Passion and enthusiasm

- The Energy Wheel: A diagnostic tool for organisational change
- Nurturing passion and enthusiasm at work
- Working from the heart in Australian professional life.



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1) The New Spirit at Work: Excellence, Creativity & Happiness

High-performance teams

- Tested and spirited approaches to developing high-performance teams
- The pursuit of excellence: a new look at an old management idea
- Intergenerational work styles: how older and younger workers can learn from each other.

Creativity and visioning

- What is corporate visioning and how can it be used effectively?
- Using creative visioning approaches in high-conflict contexts.

2) The Future of Work

Dr Wendy Sarkissian manages a small firm from a half-acre block in a tiny village in northern NSW. With modern telecommunications equipment, a pool of skilled colleagues and a modicum of self-discipline, she represents many modern-day workers searching for work-life balance while serving the demands of markets in diverse locations. Many in her demographic group are choosing alternative work contexts, while still engaging enthusiastically in their professional lives. She travels widely, has clients in several Australian states and is a frequent keynote presenter at international conferences. One client is conveniently located on the Big Island of Hawai'i.

This work life is not peculiar to Dr Sarkissian. It's a reflection of deep social and demographic changes which we must understand if we are to create flexible and adaptive organisations. While it is true that the future is not fully determined, understanding trends and social processes helps us imagine and plan more accurately for alternative futures. Trends in urban planning, employment, ageing and information technology combine to have a huge impact on the ways we will work in the future. And the seeds of much of our work futures can be seen in present trends – if we inspect them closely.

We spend so much time at work. We are reluctant to take holidays. And yet for many people their place of work is not a place of satisfaction. Workspaces designed to meet workers' needs – at many levels – can have a huge impact on mental health and happiness. Wendy Sarkissian, an expert in planning and design with *people* in mind, explains the trends we need to understand, tells her own story of the challenges of being a home worker for many years and explains the range of issues involved.

Topics within this theme:

Understanding workplace trends

- Working with and understanding younger workers
- Understanding baby boomers as workers: is anyone ever going to retire?
- Working from home.



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3) Caring for Nature in Business & the Professions

2) *Designing workspaces for the future*

- The healthy and sustainable workspace
- The home as workspace
- The sacred workspace.

Many organisations are developing environmental reporting practices and there is certainly more discussion nowadays about the role of business in environmental protection than there was a decade ago. But is an effective approach more than simply “reporting” on targets? Some people are calling for accountability, which generally means a deeper level of care and commitment than some companies have experienced in the past. How can organisations and employees approach the challenges of sustainability in ways that touch people deeply, foster real change and also contribute to the enterprise’s success?

Asking some of these questions herself, Wendy Sarkissian closed her highly successful consultant firm in 1991 to pursue a full-time doctorate in environmental ethics. She emerged – five years later – with an even stronger commitment to environmental justice, a much deeper understanding of the forces that shape environmental decision making and the roles that business, government and the professions and organisations can play in environmental protection. She has been instrumental in opening up a debate within the planning profession in Australia and overseas about the importance of “caring for Nature”.

Dr Sarkissian's journey required her to interrogate her own values and professional practice. A year living alone in rough conditions in the tropical Northern Territory challenged and anchored her commitment. Choosing to bring her new insights back to her consulting business, she has infused her work with a passion for clear-sighted acceptance of environmental problems and a search for innovative solutions. She brings these hard-earned lessons and heartfelt stories to her participatory workshops, training and keynote presentations.

Topics within this theme:

- An ethic of caring for Nature: what could that mean the way we conduct our business?
- How might we use principles of applied ethics in our work?
- What is the link between environmental sustainability and social sustainability and how can we use those concepts in our work?
- What innovative processes are available to help management and employees become more open to the need for environmental care?
- What is the role of direct contact with nature in nurturing an ethic of caring for Nature? What happens when executives go bush?