



# REAL LADDER STORIES

When I deliver my presentation around 'the change mindset', I start my story with an actual ladder and banana on stage to explain the metaphor. I put the ladder's legs on top of the banana peel and climb over it to demonstrate the absurdity of the situation. When I deliver my presentations nearby, I normally bring my own ladder with me but when I need to take a flight, I have to request a ladder from the organiser of the event.

Getting this done, having this physical ladder on stage (the banana is usually not a problem), has already led to the emergence of several other metaphorical ladders.

## BUY YOUR OWN LADDER

When the legal, health & safety departments heard that I needed a ladder to climb up, they came up with a very creative solution. They advised me to buy my own ladder and arrange for its delivery to the venue (I could reclaim the costs). This way they, as a company, wouldn't be liable for any risks. Brilliant.

## QUALITY CERTIFICATE FOR A LADDER

When I checked if it was okay to bring my own ladder to their workplace, I was requested to bring the ladder a day in advance. The reason being that all materials at the plant needed to be checked in order to receive a quality certificate. Luckily the event-organiser found an elephant path past security to avoid this procedure.

## CLIMBING A LADDER IS FORBIDDEN

I had requested a ladder from the events company a few weeks in advance thinking it a minor issue. The day before the speech I checked to see if they had managed to find a ladder. When the event organisers and the hotel manager heard that I was going to climb the ladder on stage, issues arose around Australia's strict health and safety laws. At one point, a total of 5 people (3 from the events company & 2 from the hotel) were involved in the ladder discussion. It ended with a compromise: I could have a ladder on stage, but I couldn't climb it. The general manager of the events company even had to sign a waiver to confirm this.

When I first received this news, I was disappointed that I couldn't perform my 'ladder' show. However, after 2 minutes I realised that this was probably one of the best things that could have happened. It's the perfect example of the metaphorical ladders you might need to climb before getting a physical ladder.

## SHOW ME YOUR TRAVEL INSURANCE

Before I could start my speaking tour in Australia, the organisers asked me to send a copy of my travel and professional insurance. This was to ensure that if something went wrong while climbing the ladder, they wouldn't be liable. I met trouble when I discovered I had to switch the Flemish contract to an English version - it was an arduous process (I even had to switch insurance companies to get this done).



Picture © Konstantin Gastmann

## BRING YOUR OWN LADDER

The advice that I now give to most event organisers (especially for smaller events) is to bring their own ladder from home. Avoid mentioning this to other departments in the company (certainly not legal or health & safety). This works quite well. I also liked the approach of one manager in a large energy company: he called the technical facilities department just before my presentation would start. He said he quickly needed a ladder to replace a lamp. The guy brought the ladder to the hallway and the manager promised to return it within an hour.

## THE BANANA CHALLENGE

The ladder is in most cases the most challenging element to arrange but in one case, getting a banana turned out to be quite an ordeal. That day my presentation was in the early morning (before the shops opened) and I forgot to bring my banana. The night before I had dinner in a restaurant/hotel and hoped that they would have a banana for me. I asked the waiter if they had a banana and yes, he confirmed they did.

Unfortunately, he didn't know if he was allowed to give me a banana. He had to check with the manager and two minutes later, the manager was at our table announcing that they could not give me a 'raw' banana. Food inspection regulations prohibits them from serving their guests raw food. I even tried to order a banana-split from the dessert menu (without the ice and chocolate, but with the skin), but my attempts were futile. The following morning, I did manage to find an apple, so my presentation became "Ladders & Apples".

# "DON'T MIND THE CHANGE. CHANGE YOUR MIND."

CYRIEL KORTLEVEN