



Dave Greenberg, CSP

Keynotes and Executive Crisis Simulations

"The gap between assumed readiness and observed performance is always exposed. The only question is whether it's on the front page tomorrow or identified and strengthened today."

Dave Greenberg helps leadership teams close the gap between assumed readiness and observed performance under pressure. He works with boards, executives, and senior leaders across infrastructure, healthcare, education, and other high-consequence sectors who want to understand how their leadership team will actually perform when pressure is real.

Dave delivers keynote presentations grounded in 25 years of real operational experience and his role inside New Zealand's Covid-19 response, alongside private executive crisis simulations that observe leadership behaviour under pressure.

Keynote Topics

Brace for Impact: From Crisis to Control

How leadership teams maintain clarity, communication, and control when pressure is real.

When pressure becomes real, plans alone do not create control.

Communication narrows. Decision-making slows. Leadership teams can drift into chaos instead of coordinated action. Through real stories from more than 4,000 helicopter missions and the rooms where national crisis decisions actually get made, Dave shows audiences what actually happens to leadership behaviour under pressure, and the practical frameworks that hold when it matters most.

Built around the Crocodile River Model and the BRACE framework, this is Dave's signature keynote and the talk most often booked for leadership conferences and executive events.

Audiences leave with:

- A working understanding of how pressure changes communication and decision-making
- Practical frameworks for maintaining clarity and control during disruption
- Recognition of the leadership behaviours that hold under pressure
- A shared language for executive teams to discuss crisis readiness
- Lessons that translate directly into Monday-morning leadership practice

Ideal for:

- Leadership conferences
- Executive events and offsites
- Industry association annual events
- Boards and senior leadership teams
- Organisations operating in high-consequence environments

Navigating the Crocodile River

How leadership teams recognise risk, maintain control, and perform under pressure.

Most organisations believe they are prepared for disruption until pressure rises.

Information becomes incomplete. Leadership teams are forced to make decisions with real consequences attached. Some organisations maintain control. Others become overwhelmed by uncertainty, confusion, and escalating risk.

Using the Crocodile River Model, Dave gives leaders a practical framework for recognising risk earlier, maintaining situational awareness as pressure builds, and protecting organisational performance when the operating environment becomes hostile. Drawn from 25 years of operational experience and Dave's role at the strategic end of New Zealand's Covid-19 response.

Audiences leave with:

- Understanding where the gap between assumed readiness and observed performance appears
- Earlier recognition of warning signs before situations escalate
- Insight into how high-performing teams maintain control during uncertainty
- Greater awareness of leadership behaviours under pressure
- Practical frameworks that strengthen organisational readiness

Ideal for:

- Boards and executive teams
- Risk and assurance conferences
- Leadership summits
- Government and public-sector organisations
- Organisations managing operational or strategic risk

Safety in High-Risk Environments

The human factors behind incidents, near-misses, and operational failure.

Most safety systems are sound. Most incidents are still caused by people.

Organisations invest heavily in safety procedures, yet incidents continue. Behaviour under pressure is difficult to predict, and even experienced operators can make dangerous mistakes.

Through a real near-miss on a helicopter winch operation, where one moment of lost focus could have killed him, Dave explores complacency, communication, accountability, and the behaviours that genuinely strengthen safety cultures. This is human-factors content from someone who has lived inside the consequence.

Audiences leave with:

- A clear understanding of the human factors behind incidents and near-misses
- Recognition of how complacency and familiarity increase operational risk
- Practical lessons on communication and speaking up within teams
- Stronger situational awareness in dynamic environments
- Practical lessons that translate into safer workplace behaviour

Ideal for:

- Health and safety conferences
- Construction, infrastructure, and engineering sectors
- Aviation, maritime, and transport sectors
- High-risk operational teams

Resilience Under Pressure

How leaders and teams perform when consequences run for months, not minutes.

Most leaders prepare for the incident. Few prepare for the duration.

Fatigue, uncertainty, and accountability quietly erode decision-making even within highly capable teams. Sustained pressure changes how people think, communicate, and perform. Most leadership development does not prepare for it.

Drawing on Dave's role as a Response Manager during New Zealand's Covid-19 response, this keynote explores the realities of pressure, fatigue, accountability, and leadership resilience over the long arc of a sustained event. Includes the story of a single Covid-19 decision that carried significant national consequences, told with humility rather than theatre.

Audiences leave with:

- Understanding how sustained pressure affects judgement and performance
- Recognition of the hidden impacts of fatigue and cognitive overload
- Practical strategies to maintain resilience during prolonged disruption
- Stronger decision-making during uncertain, high-consequence situations
- Frameworks for protecting personal and team resilience under pressure

Ideal for:

- Leadership conferences
- Healthcare and emergency-services organisations
- Government agencies
- Executive retreats and offsites
- Teams operating in continuously changing environments

Executive Crisis Simulations

Private, structured simulations that observe how a leadership team actually performs when pressure is real.

Most organisations have plans. Far fewer know how their leadership team will actually behave when pressure is high, information is incomplete, stakeholders are demanding answers, and consequence is real.

Dave designs and facilitates executive crisis simulations that expose the gap between assumed readiness and observed performance. The simulations are confidential, realistic, and designed to strengthen decision-making, communication, escalation, and coordination before a real event tests them.

You don't get to choose whether your leadership is tested. You only get to choose when.

What the simulation tests

- Executive decision-making under pressure
- Communication across the organisation
- Escalation pathways and leadership clarity
- Coordination between teams and functions
- Protection of Business As Usual operations
- Media, stakeholder, and reputational pressure

Common scenario types

- Cyber incidents and data breaches
- Infrastructure and operational failures

- Health, safety, and fatality events
- Reputational and stakeholder crises
- Severe weather and natural disasters
- Multi-site operational disruption
- Complex cascading incidents

What an engagement includes

- **Pre-Simulation Design Session** (60–90 minutes). Alignment on objectives, key risks, and scenario design.
- **Executive Crisis Simulation** (2–3 hours plus debrief). The scenario evolves progressively, requiring leadership to assess, decide, coordinate, and balance response activity with ongoing operations.
- **Executive Crisis Performance Diagnostic** delivered within 7 days. A concise, board-ready report covering observed leadership behaviour, where performance holds and where it breaks, and prioritised next steps.

Dave has designed and delivered more than 100 structured crisis simulations across government, infrastructure, healthcare, and high-risk industries.

About Dave

Dave Greenberg spent 25 years as a crewman on the Wellington-based Westpac Rescue Helicopter, responding to more than 4,000 missions in conditions where decisions had immediate and often irreversible consequences. From open-sea winch rescues in Cook Strait to searches in fog-filled ravines below legal minimums, the work demanded disciplined decision-making, clear escalation, and calm communication when the pressure was real.

He later took the same operational lens into the strategic tier. During New Zealand's Covid-19 response, Dave served as a Response Manager within the National Outbreak Response Team, working daily with the Director-General of Health, attending Cabinet meetings as an advisor to the Director-General, and serving as Controller during the national response to the Waikato DHB cyberattack.

Two altitudes. Same lesson.

Dave is a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP), a CIMS Level 4 instructor, holds a Graduate Certificate in Emergency Management from Massey University, and is the author of *Emergency Response: Life, Death and Helicopters* (Penguin Random House). He is based in Wellington and works across New Zealand, Australia, and Asia-Pacific.

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