



**How competing in
Fitness Modelling
taught me
to be a better
Keynote Speaker**

Gurps Khaira

*International Keynote Speaker for
AI, Cybersecurity and Change Management.*



How competing in Fitness Modelling taught me to be a better Keynote Speaker

Executive Summary

After 8 years of training and 3 years competing in the Miami Pro World Championships (Men's Over 75kg), I learned something surprising: the **discipline**, **mindset**, and **stagecraft** of fitness modelling translate directly to the keynote stage.

Whether it's flexing in front of judges or presenting AI transformation to a room of execs, the fundamentals are the same:

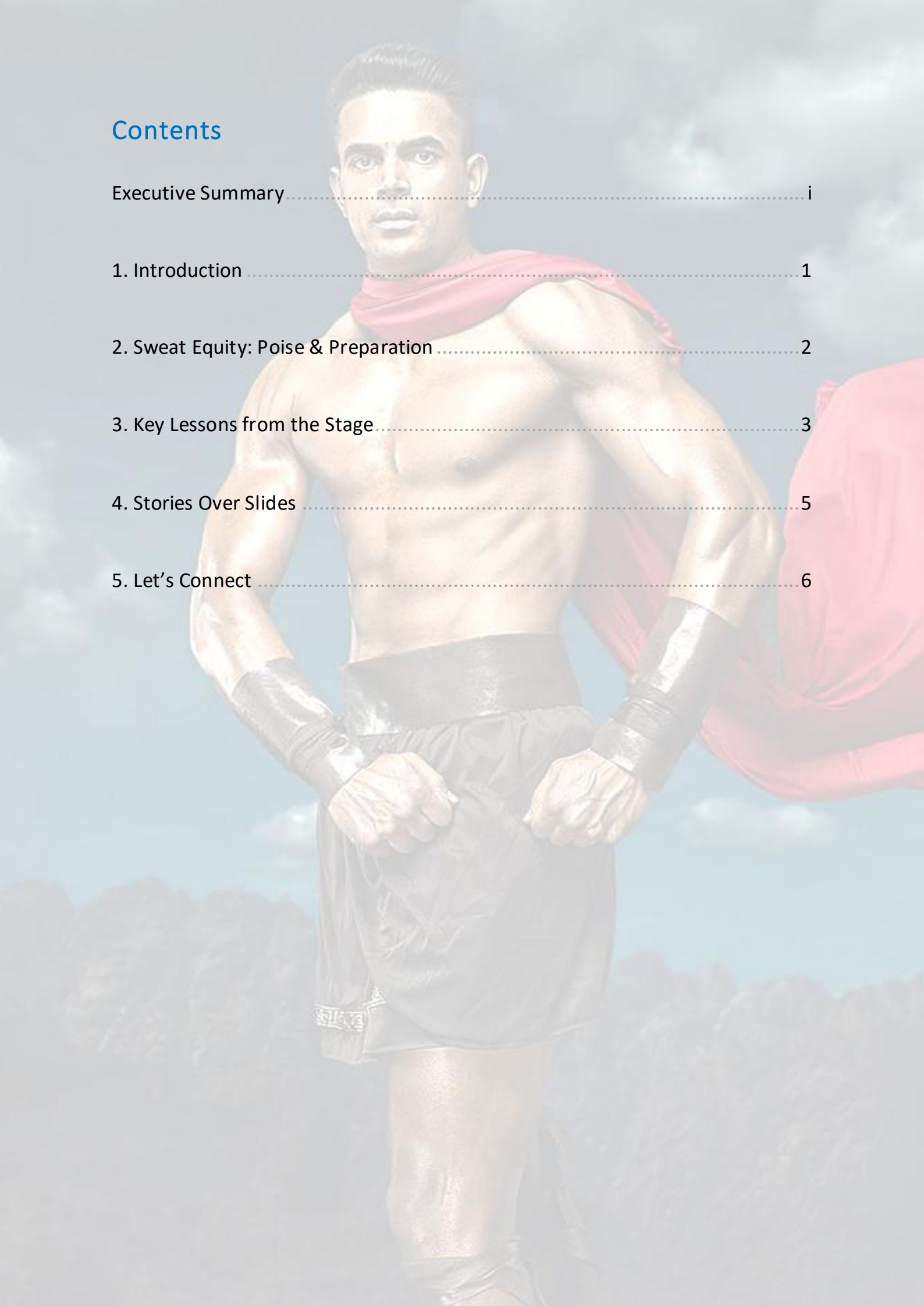
- **Preparation:** builds presence; charisma is just practiced confidence!
- **Body language:** before a word is spoken, you're already being judged.
- **Stories not slides:** audiences remember emotions, not buzzwords.
- **Performance:** both stages demand composure and clarity under pressure.

My article draws a sharp, entertaining line between posing routines and presentation poise, with lessons **speaker bookers**, **event organisers** and **conference producers** can use to spot speakers who don't just talk, but **perform!**

If your next event needs a keynote that lands with impact (and not just jargon), you'll want someone who's mastered both stages.

Contents

Executive Summary	i
1. Introduction	1
2. Sweat Equity: Poise & Preparation	2
3. Key Lessons from the Stage	3
4. Stories Over Slides	5
5. Let's Connect	6



1. Introduction

Picture this: bright stage lights, booming music, and me flexing under the spotlight for the judges at the Miami Pro World Championships, Men's Over 75kg division. Fast forward a few years, and I'm in a suit and tie with a mic, about to open keynotes on AI, Change Management and Cybersecurity. The setting changed, but guess what didn't? My **mindset**! Whether I'm flexing muscles or flexing ideas, the game is the same: own that stage! (And yes, I've learned that humans lose focus in about eight seconds¹, roughly the time it takes to flex. First impressions count!) So, before you laugh at the comparison, know this: prepping for the competition stage taught me as much about commanding attention as prepping for a boardroom full of execs.



¹ Science: You Now Have a Shorter Attention Span Than a Goldfish | TIME: <https://time.com/3858309/attention-spans-goldfish>

2. Sweat Equity: Poise & Preparation

It's easy to assume charismatic speakers just have it, but the truth is in the grind. My eight years of gym routines and competition prep built discipline, and public speakers swear by it, too. In fact, communication experts remind us that what looks like effortless confidence is years of practice in disguise. Toastmasters International taught me this firsthand: stage presence isn't magic; it's learned². (Who knew that posing routines and compulsory rounds were some of the best "confidence bootcamps" I'd ever take?) Every fitness routine or rehearsal I did trained me to manage impressions. If we develop the mannerisms of a leader, we'll be perceived as such. In other words, training your body and training your message both signal credibility, and audiences (or judges) pick up on those cues instantly.



² Toastmasters International -Mastering Body Language: <https://www.toastmasters.org/Magazine/Magazine%20Issues/2018/June2018/Body%20Language>

3. Key Lessons from the Stage

Underneath the tan and stage-ready strut, here's what both worlds share:

3.1 Practice Makes Poise

Months of diet, reps, and relentless practice on the fitness stage translate to hours of rehearsal for a keynote. Consistency matters. Toastmasters, the Professional Speaking Association and leadership pros have reminded me that stage presence is *never* an accident². It's built, rep by rep, word by word.

3.2 Own the Room with Body Language

In fitness modelling, a well-executed pose and overall physique can win your category. In speaking, body language is just as powerful. Plant your feet shoulder-width apart and don't pace², every deliberate move projects calm confidence. Lock eyes on one person at a time (yes, actually lock, thought by thought²) so your listeners feel connected. Even simple gestures help: open palms and measured hand motions underscore key points. Remember, our brains notice these cues: when you move and speak purposefully, you're saying "*I know what I'm doing*" to the audience².

3.3 Storytelling Over Buzzwords

In both arenas you win by captivating the crowd, not by jargon-dumping. A fitness routine is basically a mini-story of an 8-year transformation in 90 seconds, and a keynote should be too. Facts can inform, but stories sell. Experts say adding stories can boost audience recall (think +26% retention!³) and make points wildly more memorable⁴. Corporate audiences have already heard enough "*digital transformation*

³ The Positive Impacts of Storytelling When Giving a Presentation: <https://ethos3.com/the-positive-impacts-of-storytelling-when-giving-a-presentation/>

⁴ Mastering Storytelling in Presentations: McKinsey's 3-Step SCR Framework <https://blog.slidespilot.com/mastering-storytelling-in-presentations-mckinseys-3-step-scr-framework/>

synergy” from slides, what they remember is a relatable example or a surprising metaphor. In short, you want heads nodding, not eyes glazing: *“facts tell, stories sell.”*⁴ I learned to weave fun anecdotes from the stage into my talks, and watched the difference it makes.

3.4 Pressure-Tested Presence

Lights, camera, sweat. Flash bulbs or spotlights, the adrenaline feels surprisingly similar. After three years on the Miami Pro stage and over a decade in Toastmasters, I’ve been stress-testing my stage skills long enough to know how to keep cool. When the music stops or the Q&A lights turn on, you’re ready. That *“showtime”* moment! I’ve had 45-90 seconds of it in a competition and 45-90 minutes in a keynote, and both require the same thing: show up fully prepared and unflappable. (My unique blend of presence, performance, and pressure-tested stage skills isn’t a gimmick, it’s exactly why my audiences stay wide awake.)



4. Stories Over Slides

Look, AI and digital-transformation topics are important, but spelling out bullet after bullet on “*disruptive synergy*” is no way to ignite change. In fact, research finds that stories are 22× more memorable than facts alone⁴. Your CTO might love data, but they will remember a real-world case study weeks later. Your audience may forget what you *say*, but they’ll never forget how you made the *feel*. I always turn slides into storytelling props: analogies, visuals, even humour. It means your audience isn’t just hearing buzzwords, they’re picturing the solution. And hey, if I can learn patience training with dumbbells, your crowd can sit through a well-crafted narrative. After all, if people’s brains literally “*light up*” at a good story, why not give them that jolt?



5. Let's Connect

Thank you for reading my article. I really hope you enjoyed it and found the insights useful. If it resonated with you, feel free to get in touch as I'd love to connect and hear more about your next event. Whether it's a posing routine or a PowerPoint, I'm always ready to bring a performance that engages, entertains, and enlightens the audience.



I'd love to hear from you, ...**Message me on LinkedIn!**

(I welcome you with open arms 😊)





Gurps Khaira

*International Keynote Speaker for
AI, Cybersecurity and Change Management*



Message
me on
LinkedIn to
discuss
your next
event



Repost to
your
network to
share the
insights
with your
network



Download
to read
later if
you're too
busy right
now