



A Learning & Development Checklist for the Birds from TED speaker Munir Virani who's Enraptured with Raptors©

Munir Virani is a quiet, humble kind of guy whose eyes twinkle as he adroitly draws you into his passion, which is raptors. I contacted him recently out of the blue & asked him to speak at the monthly Learning & Development roundtable I host in Nairobi.

I was tickled when he said yes because I figured that anyone who can get people interested in a type of bird (raptors) that include some downright ugly critters that eat dead flesh (vultures) has to know a thing or two about teaching & training.



Source: Munir Virani

Others think so too as his [TED@Nairobi talk](#) has more than 800,000 hits. Both he & his partner came to the roundtable & enraptured us with raptors. After his workshop we debriefed what he's doing right when it comes to learning & development. Here's what we came up with:

- ❑ **Know thyself**—Munir is a busy guy so asked me to remind him a couple days before the workshop by email & text, which told me that he knew himself as a trainer & what he needed to get the job done. Knowing yourself, what do you need to get the job done?
- ❑ **Set the right tone right up front** – Munir started by saying that he was more nervous talking to our small group than to a large TED audience, which drew us in with his affableness & honesty. How can you set the right tone, right up front?
- ❑ **Set the stage, set a challenge** – One of the first things out of Munir's mouth was 'I'm going to get you to understand & care about raptors.' Gauntlet thrown, challenge accepted. How can you set a challenge for your audience?
- ❑ **Know thy audience** – Munir was talking to an international audience, which he deftly acknowledged, both with local examples as well as international examples. He even asked someone from New York if she knew a particular region & wove that into his talk. How can you know your audience & speak to them accordingly?
- ❑ **Just like raptors, adapt or perish** – as is the case in Nairobi, sometimes the power goes out. No power = no PowerPoint, which happened to us (& no the generator didn't kick in).

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- Munir adapted beautifully & wasn't thrown. How are you at adapting when things go sideways, as they're sometimes apt to do?¹
- ❑ **A picture is worth a thousand words** – Munir put his award winning wildlife photography skills to great use with stunning images in his PowerPoint. How can you incorporate beautiful images in yours?
 - ❑ **Use humour strategically** – Munir put us all at ease with his gentle use of humour. How can you do the same?²
 - ❑ **The golden triangle** – Munir had a wonderful blend of three key things: information, caring & action. In other words he was chockablock full of information, through his passion he got us to care & he had suggestions for us on how to take action. How can you incorporate the golden triangle with your subject matter?
 - ❑ **Access & inclusion** – Munir has his PhD so he could, if he so wished, have tied us up with technical jargon. He didn't. Non-bird experts easily understood his language. It felt accessible & inclusive as a result. What technical language might you need to watch with your subject matter expertise?
 - ❑ **Go beyond the workshop walls** – Munir offered to connect us with others in the field, to share resources & further action steps. I posted them on the [Learning & Development roundtable portal](#). What can you do, post-workshop, to encourage transfer of learning, application & additional learning in your field?
 - ❑ **Positional** – those passionate about wildlife conservation could easily be very positional– as in conservationists are right & others (local businesses for example) are wrong. Munir did a great job including lots of different perspectives, including & respecting everyone. What might you need to look out for to prevent being positional?
 - ❑ **Effecting change** – Munir's passion is preserving raptors. To do that he has to be a change agent. His recipe for change includes having a thorough understanding of the field before taking action. His theory of change also includes diverse voices, for example bringing the energy sector (which affects the environment raptors live in) + local Maasai communities + the conservation sector together at the same table. It's a holistic perspective that works. What perspectives do you need to bring together to effect change?
 - ❑ **Attention is scarce so keep it interesting** – Munir regaled us with the solving of an age-old mystery of what had [caused the death of one of the most famous ancient skulls- the 2 million year old Taung skull](#). Turns out it was an eagle (a

¹ If you need some help adapting to curve balls while speaking you must check out Scott Berkun's *Confession of a Public Speaker*. [Check out my interview with him](#).

² You know Rock.Paper.Scissors is also an entertainment company right? Which means I get to work with professional comedians. [Check out a past newsletter about using humour strategically in the workplace](#).

type of raptor) & was the result of our early ancestors climbing out of trees & beginning to walk the plains. What can you weave into your workshop to keep things interesting & keep people's attention?

- ❑ **Know your stuff** – Munir gave roughly an hour workshop with detailed information with no notes. What can you do to ensure you know your subject matter & further, to keep in front of the field?
- ❑ **Make it easy to remember your content** – Munir used the acronym H.I.P.P.O. to help us remember the threats to raptor environment.⁴ What acronym or similar technique can you use to help participants remember your content?

So there you have it – a checklist with 15 items to help you give better workshops and trainings from a TED speaker who knows what he's talking about (pun intended). Stay tuned as I've been invited to go out into the field with Munir. Whatever adventures we get up to I'll share them with you. In the meantime take good care & happy 'checklisting.'

Lee-Anne Ragan, MEd, BSW, ITC, is President of Rock.Paper.Scissors Inc. (RPS), an internationally renowned, award winning corporate training & entertainment company. Check out our [training workshop diagnosis here](#) with outlines for courses such as:

- Working Better Together: Working Smart with Creativity & Humour
- Transforming Workplace Learning through Social Media
- Facilitating Participation
- One Size Doesn't Fit All: Conflict Resolution

Other resources:

- Sign up to receive Lee-Anne's training focused blog at <http://www.rpsinc.ca/blog>
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- Are you ready to see clearly? Check out Life Lenses™ - our interactive, online self-assessment tool: www.life-lenses.com & our Life Lenses™ blog at www.life-lenses.com/blog

More about Munir: Munir Virani is a raptor biologist and wildlife photographer, and Director of the Peregrine Fund Africa Program, devoted to conserving birds of prey. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Raptor Research Foundation while also serving on Kenya's Bird Committee, the Raptor Working Group and Associate Editor for the African Journal of Ornithology - Ostrich. In 2002, Munir was awarded the Aga Khan Foundation award for excellence in the Field of Science and Technology by His Highness Prince Aymn Mohamed. Munir has published over a 100 scientific and popular articles including a paper in the esteemed journal Nature. In 2007, he was awarded a prize for the Wildlife Photographer of the Year in a competition organized by Twende Travel Magazine.

⁴ Habitat destruction, Invasive species, Population growth, Pollution/Poisoning, Over harvesting.