



## Stephen McGown

Stephen McGown, an ordinary guy, was abducted and held hostage by Al Qaeda in Mali for almost 6 years.36 at the time and travelling by motorbike from London to South Africa, he was kidnapped from Timbuktu along with a Dutch and Swedish national.

During the six years ,Stephen lived far from civilisation, kept deep in the Sahara away from the searching eyes of French surveillance planes and drones.He had limited communication with his family in the first six months of his captivity, which ceased altogether once the French Military Forces arrived in Mali.

Living outdoors in harsh conditions, he learnt a variety of skills such as how to protect himself from the elements. But most significantly, he learnt how to stay alive and positive when everything was stacked against him. Uncertain as to whether he would ever be released—or die in the Sahara—Stephen made a decision to come out of this experience a better person. He chose to hold onto hope and keep a positive attitude despite the tough and seemingly hopeless situation he was in.

Stephen was finally released in August 2017 and is now in the process of getting his life back together. Stephen is from Johannesburg where he went to school and attended university. Prior to Stephen’s kidnapping, he and his wife had been living in the UK and had plans to return back to South Africa to start a family and run his family’s farming business.

### Keynote Topics

Stephen’s keynote take’s you on a journey through his experience of being captured by Al Qaeda. A grueling story, which taps into the resilience, and hope that Stephen, the Government, and his family endured, to get him home. This is a deeply human story, which is relevant for any organization that would like to tap into themes on resilience, self leadership, hope, and team work.

Even though Stephens story is far removed from the reality of people lives, the essence of his struggles are not far off from his audience. His story is about resilience, and the overcoming of adversity amidst harsh weather conditions, a different culture, language, and religion.

### Areas of Expertise

- a. Inspirational Speaker
- b. Resilience
- c. Communication



*Educating and inspiring a nation*