

Alastair Campbell

Former Director of Communications and Strategy for the U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair. An engaging speaker known for his straight talking and honest insights into dealing with the media, strategy planning and crisis management

KEY TOPICS

- Brexit
- Crisis Management
- UK Politics
- Communication strategies

BIOGRAPHY

Early Life and Education

Alastair Campbell is a seasoned writer, communicator, and strategist, widely recognised for his time as *Tony Blair's spokesman, press secretary, and director of communications* during Blair's tenure as British Prime Minister. These days, he remains involved in UK politics while juggling a variety of roles, including writing, public speaking, supporting charities, and leading campaigns. Born in Yorkshire in 1957 to a veterinary surgeon, Alastair became **a prominent public figure**, moving with his family to Leicester in 1968. He completed his schooling there until going to Cambridge University in 1975, where he earned a degree in modern languages after four years of study. A lifelong supporter of Burnley FC, Alastair has raised significant funds for the club and remains an active fan. Through his challenges, he has learnt to survive the pressures of both media and politics, balancing his time between writing and public speaking. Over the years, he has seen his respect for politics grow, particularly in areas that **drive social change**. He has also been honoured by the *Royal College of Psychiatrists* for his contributions to **mental health awareness**. Alastair has *written extensively on politics, mental health, and social issues*, further cementing his role as a prominent public figure. His university education included a year in France when he had his first "journalism" published, articles on sex in Forum magazine.

Career in Journalism

He spent time travelling the globe, **busking with his bagpipes,** before eventually deciding to pursue a career in journalism. He started his training with the *Mirror Group*, working on local newspapers in the West Country, and joined the Mirror itself in 1982. A few years later, he moved to *Eddy Shah's Today newspaper* as news editor but faced a nervous breakdown, which led him to take time off before returning to the Mirror. Back at the Mirror, he rose to become political editor, climbing the ranks to become **the paper's top political columnist**. As a forthright journalist, he spent ten years in the media before transitioning into politics. In 1994, he worked briefly for Today under its new ownership before Alastair Campbell **joined Tony Blair's team as press secretary** after Blair became the Labour Party leader. Over the next three years, he played a pivotal role in

shaping *New Labour* and paving the way for the party's return to power. His experiences during this time gave him a profound understanding of the modern media and its role in politics, **offering an** insight into past and present events that captivated our guests. A fabulous speaker and absolutely fantastic, Alastair continues to inspire audiences with his unique perspective on journalism and politics.

Political Career

Following Labour's 1997 election victory, **Tony Blair**, the newly elected Prime Minister and leader of the Labour Party, **appointed him as Chief Press Secretary and Official Spokesman**. He managed government communications and hosted twice-daily press briefings. During Labour's first term, he helped to create New Labour and secure a second landslide victory for Blair, after which he became **Director of Communications** and Strategy. He **resigned in September 2003**, marking the end of a pivotal chapter in his career. During his time at **Downing Street**, he was deeply involved in all the major policy issues and international crises, playing a critical role in shaping the government's messaging and decisions. Reflecting on his career, he has mentioned that while a decade in the media and another in politics taught him plenty, his respect for the media declined while his appreciation for the world of politics grew. Today, he's a highly sought-after speaker at global events, sharing his expertise in strategic communications.

Post-Political Activities

A big sports enthusiast, he's contributed articles on various sports to *The Times*, *The Irish Times*, and *Esquire Magazine*. He also served as a communications adviser during the British and Irish Lions rugby tour of New Zealand in 2005. His lifelong love for Burnley FC—dating back to when he was just four years old—has driven him to raise funds for the club. His passion for charity has led to some incredible experiences, like **playing football alongside legends Diego Maradona and Pelé** and even taking part in a special edition of the hit TV show *The Apprentice*. Back in July 2007, he released **The Blair Years**, his first book, which compiled diary excerpts covering his time with Tony Blair from 1994 to 2003. It shot straight to the top of *The Sunday Times* number 1 bestseller list. Since then, he's put out six full volumes of his diaries, along with a special edition titled *The Irish Diaries*, which focuses on **the Northern Ireland peace process**. His first novel, *All in the Mind*, came out in November 2008 and earned rave reviews for its candid look at mental health. Then came his second novel, *Maya*, in February 2010, which explored the intoxicating allure of fame. His third novel, *My Name Is*, released in September 2013, tackled the heartbreaking story of a young girl struggling with alcoholism, a subject that inspired him to become an ambassador for *Alcohol Concern*. In February 2018, his fourth novel, *Saturday Bloody Saturday*, co-written with ex-footballer Paul Fletcher, hit the shelves. Books by Alastair Campbell continue to receive acclaim for their depth and relevance, including his latest book, Living Better, a recent exploration of his journey with mental health. In October 2008, he took to *BBC2* with an award-winning documentary, *Cracking Up*, sharing his personal experience of a breakdown in 1986. Both the film and his novel *All in the Mind* were highly praised by mental health advocates for **challenging the stigma surrounding mental illness**, earning him *Mind's Champion of the Year award* in May 2009. He's also tackled tough topics in other documentaries, including one about alcoholism and another about wildlife. And let's not forget the film on his love for bagpipe music, where he ended up **performing in front of 2,500 people** at Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall. Between writing and his **speaking bureau engagements**, he remains still active in politics, often addressing why he believes politics has gone so wrong in recent years. As an engaging and innovative speaker, Alastair captivates audiences with his *unique insights*, *personal stories*, and *global perspectives*, making him one of the most sought-after voices on the international stage.

Public Speaking and Media Engagements

After the UK voted to leave the EU, he played a key role in launching **The New European**, a newspaper **dedicated to opposing Brexit**. Serving as editor-at-large, he contributes a weekly column and frequently speaks at rallies and campaign events focused on reversing Brexit. He contributes a monthly interview column for *GQ magazine*, featuring an eclectic mix of personalities like Prince William, José Mourinho, Al Gore, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Nicola Sturgeon, and Nicola Adams. A sports enthusiast through and through, he's penned articles for *The Times, The Irish Times, and Esquire*, covering a variety of athletic pursuits. Back in 2005, he served as the communications adviser for the British and Irish Lions rugby tour in New Zealand. A lifelong supporter of Burnley FC—he's been a fan since he was just four years old—he spearheaded a fundraising campaign to help the club during a period of financial hardship. These days, Burnley is thriving in the Premier League. His charity work has led to some incredible experiences, including playing football alongside legends Diego Maradona and Pelé and taking part in a special edition of the hit TV show The Apprentice. During his time at Downing Street, he played a key role in tackling major policy decisions and navigating international crises. Reflecting on his career, he shared that while a decade in media left him increasingly disillusioned with journalism, his decade in politics only deepened his admiration for the field. His expertise led to two appearances at the Leveson Inquiry into press standards—once to provide insights on contemporary journalism and again to discuss the evolving dynamic between politics and the media. Today, keynote speaker Alastair Campbell is highly regarded as a sought-after public speaker, represented by a leading speaker bureau. He offers guidance on strategic communication, leadership, team dynamics, and crisis management. As a keynote speaker, he's recognised for his **ability to captivate audiences with engaging and innovative speeches**, making him a top choice for anyone seeking impactful talent. Following the success of Winners, he's been approached by some of the world's top sports organisations for advice and support.

WHAT PEOPLE SAY

> "*"Alastair was a sensation during his New Zealand visit. Senate Communications Counsel held his only public speaking engagements in the country. They were a sell-out, attended by hundreds of the country's leaders in business, society and politics. Everyone who attended were talented and opinionated people in their own right – yet all were entertained and impressed by Alastair's colourful and engagingly delivered anecdotes and views."* "
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> **— Mark Blackham, Partner, Senate Communication Counsel**

> "*"Alastair was a keynote speaker at Promax, a conference that has hosted over the years impressive speakers from Bill Clinton to Sir George Martin. It's fair to say that Alastair was one of the best we have heard from. He set out to carefully tailor his insights to a largely creative audience, and his anecdotes were told with the ease of a master storyteller. From first contact to the end of the question and answer session he was interested, engaged and hugely appreciated by the attendees."*"
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> **— Charlie Mawer, Exec Creative Director, Red Bee Media.**

> "*"Alastair spoke at our annual dinner in May. He amused us with witty anecdotes about Tony Blair and interested us with thought provoking comment on the future of the Labour Party. He was an excellent speaker who also took the right wing heckling in his stride!"* "
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> **— Annabel Brodie-Smith, Communications Director, Association of Investment Companies, Hilling Ernst and Young**