

Mike Abrashoff

When Mike Abrashoff took charge of the USS Benfold, he was the most junior officer in the Pacific Fleet, and the ship was one of the worst performers. Fast forward a year, and that very ship had risen to become the Navy's best without swapping out the crew. What Michael Abrashoff achieved with the USS Benfold highlights issues that many organisations wrestle with. That's why his story has been featured in publications like The Wall Street Journal, Harvard Business Review, and Fast Company. As a highly sought-after keynote speaker, he inspires others with his approach to leadership and organisational change. Book Mike for an event or workshop today.

KEY TOPICS

- **It's Your Ship – Achieving Breakthrough Performance**
- **The Virtual Leader's Roadmap**
- **No Limits – Don't Let Goals Become Limitations**
- **Go Deeper with Half-Day and Full-Day Programs**

BIOGRAPHY

About Mike Abrashoff

When **former Naval Commander Michael Abrashoff** assumed command of the *USS Benfold*, he was the Pacific Fleet's most junior officer, leading a ship that ranked near the bottom in performance. Just one year later, the *Benfold* had soared to the top of the rankings—with the exact same crew. This remarkable transformation underscores a powerful principle: effective leadership shapes success, and a strong culture drives it all. **Michael Abrashoff's** experience inspired him to write three books, including *It's Your Ship*, which has sold over 1.3 million copies. Through his Leadership Roadmap, he shares practical, proven strategies to help anyone **spark meaningful change**. His approach focuses on *small*, *manageable actions* that lead to **big improvements**, empowering people at all levels to create a *more effective and positive workplace*. His transformation of the USS Benfold stands *as a testament to the impact leadership can have on a ship in the Navy*. Mike is clear: "I didn't turn the ship around—my crew did that. What I did was to create an environment where they felt safe, empowered, and supported. When you do that, anything is possible." "When my crew came to me with a problem, I'd say, 'It's your ship—how would you fix it? '. Mike zeroed in on the one thing he could control: his crew's mindset. He understood that a strong, positive culture is the most powerful advantage any organisation can have. Mike developed a management framework he calls The Leadership Roadmap. At the heart of his approach on the USS Benfold was a *shift from rigid command-and-control tactics* to a **focus on building commitment and unity**. He prioritised connecting with his crew on a deeper level, winning their hearts, minds, and loyalty through genuine conviction and humble leadership. "The most important thing that a captain can do is to see the ship through the eyes of the crew. The idea is to empower every individual to share the responsibility of achieving excellence." Mike Abrashoff's leadership principles delivered results that were nothing short of extraordinary. *Turnover on the USS Benfold plummeted to just 1%*—an unheard-of achievement. Promotions tripled, and the *crew cut operating expenses by 25%*. Recognised as the finest ship in the Pacific Fleet, the Benfold earned the prestigious Spokane Trophy for its exceptional combat readiness.

During his naval career, **Mike also helped draft the air defence strategy for U.S. forces**, including the air defence plan for naval forces in the Persian Gulf. These plans showcased his ability to *think strategically under high-stakes conditions*. Mike has authored three impactful books, beginning with *It's Your Ship*, which delivers a timeless lesson: **stop blaming outside obstacles** and focus on what you can control to achieve incredible outcomes. His follow-ups, *It's Our Ship* and *Get Your Ship Together*, explore how leaders have applied these principles to transform their own organisations. As a sought-after keynote speaker, Mike inspires audiences to challenge their assumptions about leadership and culture. Whether he's addressing **Fortune 500 executives, startups, university students, or frontline teams**, he tailors his message to topics like engagement, execution, innovation, diversity, safety, and accountability. Before commanding the Benfold, Mike served as Military Assistant to Secretary of Defence William J. Perry, helped draft air defence plans for the Persian Gulf during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and was executive officer on the Cruiser Shiloh, where he supported UN sanctions against Iraq. Today, Mike leads *Aegis Performance Group*, a consulting firm dedicated to helping leaders tackle challenges in leadership, talent, and performance. He and his team encourage leaders to rethink their approach, inspiring them to unlock new levels of success for themselves, their teams, and their organisations.

Keynote Topics

What Mike achieved with the USS Benfold mirrors challenges many organisations face today. His story has been featured in top publications like *The Wall Street Journal*, *Harvard Business Review*, and *Fast Company* as a powerful lesson in leadership. Leaders, in particular, connect with Mike's experience of being held accountable for results in an environment where he had no control over the rules—a scenario many find all too familiar. As a sought-after **keynote speaker**, Mike brings these lessons to life, using his **keynote speaking** engagements to inspire audiences with actionable insights and proven leadership strategies.

IT'S YOUR SHIP – ACHIEVING BREAKTHROUGH PERFORMANCE

When Mike Abrashoff stepped aboard the USS Benfold as its new commander, the situation was bleak—morale was in the gutter, turnover was through the roof, and the ship's performance lagged near the bottom of the Pacific Fleet. Fast forward a year, and the Benfold had skyrocketed to the top, ranked as the **best ship in the entire Navy**—all with the same crew. The takeaway? Leadership shapes success, and culture is the foundation of it all. In this inspiring talk, Mike shares actionable strategies for anyone aiming to greatly improve organisational performance. He recognised early on that for the ship in the Navy to improve, he had to *rethink his leadership approach*. By fostering trust and empowering his crew to take ownership, innovate, and tackle challenges head-on, he turned the Benfold into the **top-performing ship in the entire Navy**, offering valuable lessons for leaders everywhere. Top-down leadership is dead, so when the crew would present a problem, Mike became famous for responding, "What would YOU do? It's YOUR ship! "Mike's presentation leaves audiences with the tools and inspiration to accomplish big goals.

THE VIRTUAL LEADER'S ROADMAP

When Mike Abrashoff took command of one of the Navy's lowest-performing ships, he knew he had to rethink his entire leadership approach. The stakes were high—without significant improvement, the consequences could have been catastrophic for his crew. Mike responded by embracing a fresh set of guiding principles, prioritising trust, authentic engagement, and empowering his sailors. That shift in leadership transformed the USS Benfold into the Navy's top-performing ship and introduced **new ways to maximise performance**. Leaders especially

identify with Mike's journey, as it highlights strategies that can prompt leaders at all levels to drive meaningful change. Interestingly, these same principles are vital for organisations navigating the challenges of virtual work. While many have seen short-term productivity gains with remote setups, sustaining that effectiveness requires leaders to adopt new strategies. Success in this environment comes from focusing on outcomes rather than micromanaging activity and ensuring team members feel valued and recognised for their contributions. Leaders who master these skills will gain a powerful edge, building a culture of trust and accountability that thrives—whether teams are in the same room or miles apart.

NO LIMITS – DON'T LET GOALS BECOME LIMITATIONS

In our careers, it's easy to feel like we're locked in a battle to outperform a competitor or meet someone else's benchmarks. But often, the real competition is with ourselves—we just haven't realised it yet. When you're focused on beating the competition, you might aim to edge them out by a small margin—a few extra sales or a slight percentage gain. Or maybe you're handed a goal by leadership that's based on average expectations. That's exactly where Mike Abrashoff found himself when he took command of a struggling ship in the U.S. Navy. His initial objective? Simply to reach "average", he and his crew worked toward modest goals until Mike had a breakthrough moment: the real challenge wasn't external—it was about pushing past their own self-imposed limits. That shift sparked one of the most **remarkable turnarounds that was chronicled** in leadership circles, inspiring others to **rethink their beliefs about leadership**. His story encourages organisations to go beyond average and **create new ways to elevate** performance and potential. This mindset shift transformed his approach to leadership. By refusing to settle for mediocrity, Mike and his team achieved one of the most dramatic turnarounds, a success story featured in *Harvard Business Review*, *Fast Company*, and his bestselling book, *It's Your Ship*. This talk will inspire audiences to rethink how they set goals and challenge the belief that limits are fixed. The key takeaway? The only barriers standing in your way are the ones you create.

GO DEEPER WITH HALF-DAY AND FULL-DAY PROGRAMMES

Take a closer look at the Leadership Roadmap with a half-day or full-day programme designed to deliver practical tools and strategies you can use right away in your workplace. These sessions are a popular follow-up to Mike's keynote speaking, offering a hands-on opportunity to explore what it takes to build high-performing leaders, teams, and organisations. Whether facilitated by Mike himself or a senior strategist from his firm, *Aegis Performance Group*, these workshops are highly interactive, engaging participants in meaningful discussions and activities that bring the Leadership Roadmap to life. To learn more or to **schedule Mike Abrashoff** for **speaking engagements**, contact us today. Interested in learning more? Reach out for details and programme descriptions tailored to your needs.

WHAT PEOPLE SAY

> "*"Your talk was spot on. Your message resonated with the audience and their comments were lighting up the app!! Thank you for focusing in on the retention theme as it is top of mind for all the leaders in the room. Now I know why Fidelity has invited you to speak so many times!"*"
>
> **— Events Manager, Fidelity Investments**

> "*"Mike, you hit it out of the park, as I knew you would. Your message was on point and was exactly what I was looking for. It emphasized some of the things we were already working on and provided a good foundation for us to build on. All the best and if you ever need a strong referral, send them my way."*"

— President/CEO, Empire Caterpillar Southwest

"*“Mike was so fabulous – not a dry eye in the audience. He made us look good, but more importantly, he inspired our leaders to be their best and get better – even if by just 1% a day. We will definitely want to work with him again in the future.”*"

— U.S. Patent & Trademark Office (VIRTUAL EVENT)