

Colonel Terry Virts

Colonel Terry Virts is a former NASA astronaut, International Space Station commander, Space Shuttle pilot and retired United States Air Force colonel. With 213 days in space across two missions, he brings first-hand lessons on leadership, risk and teamwork to corporate audiences. As a keynote speaker, Terry shares an extraordinary perspective shaped by life in orbit and decades of high-pressure decision-making.

KEY TOPICS

- **Why your organisation needs to innovate like the Apollo programme**
- **The necessity of vision and strategy**
- **Fascinating perspectives on global wealth and well-being**

BIOGRAPHY

Terry Virts: From Fighter Pilot to NASA Astronaut

Before becoming a NASA astronaut, Colonel Terry Virts served in the United States Air Force as an F-16 fighter pilot and experimental test pilot.

He graduated from the United States Air Force Academy and later studied at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and Harvard Business School. He was also a member of the U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base, where he worked with the F-16 Combined Test Force.

NASA selected Virts for its astronaut class in 2000. During his career with the agency, he held several technical roles, including lead astronaut for the T-38 training jet programme, chief of the Astronaut Office's Robotics Branch and lead astronaut for the Space Launch System rocket programme.

That background gives Terry plenty to draw on when speaking about risk management, communication and leadership. His stories come from environments where teams need to make sound decisions quickly, trust their training and work effectively under pressure.

His First Spaceflight Aboard Space Shuttle Endeavour

Terry Virts made his first spaceflight on 8 February 2010 as pilot of Space Shuttle Endeavour during the STS-130 mission.

The mission lasted nearly 14 days and delivered the Tranquility module and Cupola to the International Space Station. The Cupola, with its seven windows overlooking Earth, has since become one of the most recognisable parts of the ISS.

For Virts, piloting a Space Shuttle was the culmination of years spent as a military pilot, fighter pilot, test pilot and astronaut. It also gave him first-hand experience of working within a highly trained team where preparation mattered and every crew member had a clearly defined role.

Commanding the International Space Station

Virts returned to space in November 2014 aboard the Russian Soyuz TMA-15M spacecraft alongside Anton Shkaplerov and Samantha Cristoforetti.

He initially served as a flight engineer during Expedition 42 before assuming command of the International Space Station as Commander of Expedition 43.

Across his two spaceflights, Terry Virts spent 213 days in space, roughly seven months in total. He also performed three spacewalks with fellow NASA astronaut Barry Wilmore, spending 19 hours and 2 minutes outside the station.

Living and working aboard the ISS meant collaborating closely with people from different countries, professional backgrounds and cultures. That experience now shapes his talks on intercultural leadership, teamwork and communication.

For organisations with international teams, his lessons learned from the International Space Station offer a rare perspective on what effective collaboration looks like when trust and clear communication really matter.

A Unique Perspective on Life on Earth

Spending months above the planet changed the way Terry Virts saw life on Earth.

Photography became an important part of his time in orbit. During his International Space Station mission, Virts set a record for the most photographs taken during a space mission, capturing more than 300,000 images.

His photography later became the basis for the National Geographic book *View From Above: An Astronaut Photographs the World*.

Terry was also one of the featured astronauts in the IMAX film *A Beautiful Planet*, which used footage filmed aboard the International Space Station to give audiences an astronaut's view of Earth.

That visual perspective plays an important role in a Terry Virts keynote. His photographs and footage allow audiences to see the planet from a viewpoint few people will ever experience, while his stories bring the realities of spaceflight back down to Earth.

Leadership When the Stakes Are High

Terry Virts' leadership experience was built in environments where preparation, judgement and teamwork could have serious consequences.

As a fighter pilot, test pilot, Space Shuttle pilot and commander of the ISS, he learned how teams prepare for risk, respond when circumstances change and continue making decisions when there is little room for error.

His keynote presentations use lessons from aviation and spaceflight to explore risk management, communication and organisational culture. He looks at what high-performing teams do well, what happens when communication breaks down and why leaders need people around them who are willing to speak up.

The setting may be very different from a corporate boardroom, but many of the challenges are familiar. Leaders still need to make decisions with incomplete information, build trust across teams and remain focused when the original plan no longer works.

Keynote Topics for Corporate Events

Terry Virts speaks on diverse topics shaped by his experience in aviation, spaceflight and international leadership.

His keynote themes include intercultural leadership, crisis and risk management, high-performing teams, organisational change, strategy and vision, communication, decision-making and the future of space exploration.

He also speaks about life on Earth from an astronaut's perspective, using his experiences aboard the International Space Station to explore environmental responsibility and the value of seeing familiar challenges from a different point of view.

His presentations combine photography, video and first-hand stories, making them well suited to leadership conferences, corporate events and international audiences.

Beyond NASA: Author, Filmmaker and Photographer

Since leaving NASA in 2016, Terry Virts has continued to share his experiences through books, filmmaking, photography and public speaking.

His books include the National Geographic photography title *View From Above*, *How to Astronaut: An Insider's Guide to Leaving Planet Earth* and the children's book *The Astronaut's Guide to Leaving the Planet*.

He has also directed several films, including *One More Orbit*, *Cosmic Perspective* and *The Night After*.

One More Orbit documented a record-breaking 2019 flight around the world via the North and South Poles. Completed during the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon landing, the flight achieved a Guinness World Records title for the fastest circumnavigation of Earth via both geographical poles.

These projects allow Terry to bring more than his NASA career to the stage. His work as an author, photographer and filmmaker gives his presentations a strong visual and storytelling element that keeps audiences engaged.

Why Book Terry Virts?

Terry Virts brings first-hand experience of spaceflight and high-pressure leadership to the stage.

He can take an audience inside a Space Shuttle launch, explain what it feels like to perform a spacewalk and describe the responsibility of assuming command of the International Space Station. He then connects those

experiences to challenges leaders recognise in their own organisations.

His talks examine how teams prepare for risk, how people respond when plans change and how colleagues from different cultures can work towards a shared goal.

For event hosts looking for a keynote speaker who combines an extraordinary personal story with useful lessons for the workplace, Colonel Terry Virts offers a memorable perspective on leadership, teamwork and decision-making.

Book Terry Virts for Your Next Event

Book Terry Virts for a keynote that gives audiences a first-hand look at spaceflight, leadership and decision-making under pressure.

From his first spaceflight as pilot of Space Shuttle Endeavour to commanding the International Space Station, Terry brings experiences few speakers can share.

Contact us to discuss Terry Virts' speaking fees, availability and suitability for your next corporate event, leadership conference or international programme.

WHAT PEOPLE SAY

> "*“Terry´s enlightening presentation at our company´s 150th anniversary was inspiring and in its truest sense of word eye opening. Terry shared personal stories from his spaceflight, presented fascinating views from above and extensive insights into global wealth and environment. Terry won our hearts and brains.”*"
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> **— Mag. Silvio Kirchmair, CEO of umdasch Store Makers**

> ""*Terry is a regular guest lecturer at Harvard Business School and always a highlight for our participants- he combines fascinating stories, dynamic connection with his audience, and unique perspectives on leadership as well as life on earth.*""
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> **— Dr. Sunil Gupta, Harvard Business School Professor and Chair of the General Management Program**

> "*“Terry truly gave an inspiring speech, which motivated our team to see the bigger picture. With fascinating stories and lessons learned especially concerning intercultural leadership he give an impressive insights for a pan-European company like ours.”*"
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> **— Christian B. WALTER GROUP – Member of the Management Board**