

Céline Cousteau

Explorer and Filmmaker

Keynote Speaker 2016 TPA Sustainability Summit



Céline Cousteau, the daughter of ocean explorer Jean-Michel Cousteau and granddaughter of legendary explorer and filmmaker Jacques Cousteau, is an adventurer in her own right. An explorer both above and below the sea, she is constantly traversing the world, taking part in new experiences and sharing her love of the Earth with people around the globe. Her past role in the Ocean Futures Society has helped draw the organization recognition in Europe and raise awareness for the Cousteau mission of protecting the sea and its treasures.

- ***What drove you to found CauseCentric Productions?***

(Note that CauseCentric is not a nonprofit organization, it is part of an LLC- we morphed the 501c3 status to form The Céline Cousteau Film Fellowship)

Cousteau: CauseCentric Productions was created to amplify cause-focused stories and inspire action to support humanitarian and environmental causes. I wanted to create a megaphone for the voices less heard- the local heroes working on the ground defending and protecting lives, ecosystems, and species.

The Céline Cousteau Film Fellowship, a 501c3 nonprofit, was established to give a storytelling opportunity and experience to aspiring filmmakers, creatives, and activists to tell important conservation stories.

- ***What, in your opinion, is the biggest challenge for sustainability, overall? What is the biggest opportunity?***

Cousteau: A major challenge revolves around our need to shift human consciousness to integrate sustainability as a way of being and not just a behavior. This is also the biggest opportunity because if we can change the way people think about their role in sustainability, it is a long lasting shift.

- ***What unique challenges do you see for sustainability for our oceans? Are there lessons that we can learn and apply to other more "mainstream" sustainability topics?***

Cousteau: The oceans face a myriad of challenges from illegal, unreported, and unsustainable fishing, to visible and invisible pollution, acidification, sea level rise from climate change, and the need to sustainably manage to the use of the oceans for transportation, tourism, and leisure. This is the massive challenge- it's complexity. We need to understand and protect the oceans with a sophisticated systemic approach implementing a variety of tactics for a complex system. When the majority of this ecosystem is not visible to the mainstream person, it makes it harder to make it relatable.

- ***What is something you wish you knew 20 years ago about sustainability/ what would you tell a young professional in this field?***

Cousteau: If I knew 20 years ago that I had an influential voice in affective storytelling I would

have started earlier, but at the same time, I would not have acquired certain skills that have been useful had I not followed the path I did. My recommendation would be to start early implementing strategies of sustainability and keep going by influencing others to be more mindful. It matters.

- ***What is the biggest lesson you've learned about this profession? What has been your biggest success in this field?***

Cousteau: It takes unending passion, conviction, and stamina to keep giving the amount of energy needed for this work.

I'm still doing what I believe in despite the challenges.

- ***How has the work of your family, particularly your father and grandfather, influenced you and your life? Did you always want to follow in their footsteps or was there a defining moment when you realized you shared the same calling?***

Cousteau: It wasn't just my grandfather and father that influenced me, my grandmother and mother were also part of the expeditions that the world knows about, though they weren't the ones the world knew. These women inspired me to understand we can all be part of inspiration; it is the creation of a cohesive team that makes the mission possible.

My interests are partially reflected through my studies of psychology, art, and a masters in intercultural relations; and it is my family's legacy that influenced where I took those interests, leading me to place the human in the middle of the environmental story. It wasn't one moment that defined my path but rather a natural unification of my own interests merging with my family's history.

- ***If there is one thing you want people attending your keynote speech to walk away with what would that be?***

Cousteau: If someone is at all inspired by any of the stories I share with them, my wish is that they use this as momentum to become participants of change in whatever cause they believe in and thus continue a powerful domino effect.