

Breakthrough - Championship Living in a Computer Age

Richard M. Byrne, PhD

Preface by: Robert C. Turner, RBP, FBPA

Dr. Richard Byrne's 1976 Keynote presentation offered sage advice to all biocommunicators that focused on embracing computer technology. Perhaps now, more than ever for many of us, his universal message still rings true.

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The Keynote Address at BIO '76, the combined annual meetings of the Association of Biomedical Communications Directors (ABCD), the Association of Medical Illustrators (AMI), the Biological Photographic Association (BPA), and the Health Science Communications Association (HeSCA), was presented by Richard M. Byrne,

PhD, Dean, Annenberg School of Communication, University of Southern California (USC).

Little did the audience know this address would become a watershed moment for many individuals' professional careers. The sage advice, offered by the late Dr. Byrne, was inspiring and insightful about how one should embrace the challenges of emerging computer technologies, which were invading every aspect of our professional and personal lives. For decades to follow, attendees referred to his presentation as a hallmark moment. I was most fortunate to be in the audience of his 1976 address and can still vividly recall many of his "take-away" points, including:

- "Communicating (definition): To share."
- "Find out what you do well... and do a lot of it!"
- "Don't complain to someone, who can't do anything about it!"
- "Always be ready for: 'So what?'. "

In addition to his stellar presentation at BIO '76, Richard Byrne also presented at Vision '82 (BPA's Annual Meeting), and at a number of BPA regional meetings. Later, he moved on from his USC position to form a private company, wherein he was a much sought after speaker and workshop facilitator in the private, public, and corporate sectors. As an in-demand motivational communications speaker, his talks evolved to an offering of twelve presentations, which he crafted into a set of cassette tapes, titled: "BREAKTHROUGH: CHAMPIONSHIP LIVING IN A COMPUTER AGE."



Dr. Byrne's cassette tape series

The twelve talks will be presented here within the *Journal of Biocommunication* in groups of four articles per issue. Our current issue features Dr. Byrne's first four transcribed presentations. The actual audio may be

accessed via the accompanying MP3 links found on the JBC Table of Contents.

Although it has been more than three decades since these talks were created (1985), the content being conveyed is still, if not even more so, appropriate for today's biocommunicators. The following message was included as an introductory letter on the inside cover of the cassette binder. There is no better way to introduce these JBC articles, than to include the actual "Introduction" written by Richard Byrne's wife, Mary Ann.

Introduction

In 1985 Richard produced a cassette series, which clearly defines his concept of what he calls "Breakthrough." It is a potent enunciation of his idea of the impact of technological change on how business is done now and in the future. It is also a belief system of how he lived his life.

Early this past summer, Richard wrote a paper entitled "Beginnings and Breakthroughs" for inclusion in a friend's book. I believe it foretold of his own forthcoming breakthrough from this existence to the next.

"A Breakthrough is an electrifying, quantum leap forward in human experience. It is a successful assault on a barrier which either shatters the barrier, leaps over it, or simply dissolves it by act of will."

"A Breakthrough creates a sharp fracture in time and space. There is clearly a 'time before' and a 'time after.' Things can never be the same after a genuine breakthrough. The event alters the way you, and the world, think about the activity and the barrier forever."

"A breakthrough is a startling, spontaneous, almost instantaneous development. ... It can be a mental feat, such as the discovery of a new idea or perception about the world, It can be a sudden realization of what you need to do, and the willingness to do it."

"A Breakthrough is an 'arranged miracle.' It is a spontaneous and miraculous accomplishment, but it can be created. And you can learn to control the process. Breakthrough is what you need when you suddenly find that your very best is not good enough. If you can't change your performance, you have to change the game you are playing."

Richard was always excited about "breakthroughs" and the subsequent living with all the options, all the fears, and the void of uncertainty on the other side of the barrier. It is an idea that fit him like an elegant leather glove. Most of you have experienced his ability to excite you and others about the potential of breaking through barriers and "getting started" with new options in life. "Getting started" is a good idea every day, but especially in the New Year of 1989."

Best wishes for happiness in the year ahead.

Mary Ann

Mary Ann Byrne

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Thank you all!

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