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Institute of Human Development

## **Authentic Leadership**

### Transforming Your People and Your Organisation

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## Background

Since 1994 Adrian Gilpin and his colleagues at the Institute of Human Development have been working with many owners, senior managers and Directors of small, medium and large organisations to explore real and sustainable ways of creating exceptional levels of individual and collective achievement.

Adrian Gilpin has been mentoring CEOs and their board directors while his colleagues have been coaching top teams and helping to inspire and shape organisations that are committed to developing a peak-performance culture.

This document is a collection of thoughts that we hope will help executives clarify their complex agendas and better understand the dynamics of change – change that happens to an organisation and change that is generated by an organisation.

Most talented executives are driven to achieve by their nature. It is what makes them great - at least potentially great. It is also what can sometimes blind them to what is really going on inside their organisations. **Many executives, especially CEOs are unaware of the extent to which anxiety, mistrust, petty rivalries and personality conflicts among the management teams and workforce are actively preventing the organisation from being great.**

One purpose of this document is to make readers more aware of the discreet conditions that can undermine their own Vision.

The other purpose is to provide a disciplined framework for what needs to be done to change an environment from confusion to clarity; from one of average performance to one of peak performance.

If any of the issues in this document ring true, the authors would welcome the opportunity to meet you to discuss the topic further. Adrian Gilpin can be contacted on 0800 074 0518.

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## Living the Brand

The single most significant difference between the IHD's approach and other consultancy-led change programmes is that it will enable you to translate your Brand (the very essence and architecture of your business) into Behaviour (the mechanics by which you live the Vision). This document attempts to explain this in detail.

Peak-performing organisations share many traits in common; only some of which we will attempt to cover in this document. Few organisations (even peak-performing ones) are masters of all these traits. However, there are key traits that seem to be fundamental to achieving market dominance and higher than average performance metrics.

In our experience, authentic transformational leaders learn how to:

- Build and purify a dominating brand
- Align communities of people to a single, compelling vision
- Make ordinary people into peak-performers
- Develop transformational follower-ship skills at all levels of the organisation
- Translate brand values into consistent behaviours throughout the organisation
- Unlock magnificence in self and others

There are academics, experts and consultants who specialise in each of these disciplines. Any one of these disciplines, if mastered, could give you massive competitive advantage.

Think, however, what could be if you wove all five disciplines into a seamless framework for inspiring and educating your entire workforce?

Imagine how achievable this would be if you did not need to retain 'experts' and consultants to implement each detail

of the change programme, but your own people took ownership and developed the skills to make the change.

The framework that we set out in this document is deliberately provocative. It is also unique, practical, proven, rooted in the real world of organisations that face fluctuating economies, and it has proved to be awesomely powerful in guiding transformation.

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## What Do You Want To Be Remembered For?

Peak Performing Organisations are as rare as peak-performing athletes. Most organisations plod, slightly hysterically, through the minefields of fashion, economic and cultural shifts and the current “e” obsession. Performing at all is often a miracle; peak-performance is a far away dream for most.

Most business leaders know or hope that they are just about on top of things, as long as things don't get worse. There is daily news of wealthy, talented organisations losing market dominance, or collapsing altogether because they failed to be in peak condition.

In any given sector, at any given moment in time, a handful of leaders decide to do things differently. **These are the leaders who will be remembered for changing things, making a difference, leaving a legacy.** These are the leaders who buck trends, who inspire extraordinary loyalty from their people, who take investors and shareholders with them as they forge a new way of running their organisation.

Few leaders start out this way. Most can remember the moment when they decided that enough was enough. Most have, at one stage, looked at the sheer sweat, effort and personal risk of running an organisation and decided that it was time they started doing things their way and creating an organisation that they could be proud of – creating a premier division player.

A very high percentage of Senior Executives have achieved many of their personal milestone goals; at least the financial ones. Many are facing what might be called a professional mid-life crisis; asking themselves: What am I doing? What do I want to do next? Who do I really want to be?

The exponential growth of executive mentoring and CEO forums, such as The Academy of Chief Executives (ACE) and The Executive Committee (TEC) are testament to the fact that more and more executives are seeking ways of

making sense of what they are trying to build and how this fits in with their lives.

In our experience, most decide that shaping and leading an organisation of some sort is what they value most and what they love to do; but it gets tougher and tougher. If only there was more help.

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## Organisation – machine or organism?

Every business school, guru and consultancy company is offering promised solutions and 'expertise' in how to build an organisation of excellence. The choice of methodologies is bewildering and almost always contradictory.

There are generally two approaches.

**The common approach** – and the foundations of the large majority of consultancy models – is to view an organisation systemically; as a complex network of systems and processes that can be fine-tuned by experts and made to function more efficiently.

**A new approach** – and the foundations of the frameworks discussed in this document – is to view an organisation organically; as a community of individuals all living their lives at varying degrees of happiness and stress, all making different levels of commitment to the organisational vision, and all finding that their human foibles and failings are preventing them from operating more effectively.

Both approaches have value at a logical level and there is no doubt that many of the systemic methodologies offered could work *theoretically*. BUT the problem is that most systemic methodologies require every part of the system to be operating efficiently or the whole thing falls over. Being harsh, these methodologies forget that human beings are human and expect them to behave like obedient components in an engine or software programme. They don't.

The real challenge here is that more than 70% of executives are more inclined to be systemic thinkers rather than 'organic' thinkers. It is possible, indeed it is vital for survival, to learn to think differently.

It is often said by inspiring leaders that if you go on thinking the way you have always thought, you will go on doing what you have always done. In the past it was true that if you go on doing what you have always done, you will go

on getting what you have always got.

This is no longer true. In complex, changing systems even what used to work no longer works. The rules have changed – not to new rules but almost to no rules. No one knows what works. The best we can do is to know what worked once – historically. Now we have to test, to explore. This is profoundly changing the dynamics of organisations as we can see from the music industry, the railway industry, the energy industry, financial services, telecoms, travel, banking and even the way currencies are working globally.

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## A Framework for Peak Performance

Peak Performance is an outcome; it is the automatic by-product of what might be called excellence-conditioning. Sporting metaphors, while somewhat over used in business, are appropriate here. An athlete works out to develop fitness, strength, flexibility, stamina, resilience, muscle tone, capacity etc. By developing his condition he is able to access his natural talents when it matters most. If an athlete stopped conditioning himself for excellence, he would fail – not only fail to win, but fail even to be in the running for championship events. And so it is for an organisation.

Even an athlete who is out of condition can still find somewhere to run or play; but he won't be in the big time. So too an organisation; it will always be able to find something to sell to someone, but if it is out of condition it cannot play in the serious league.

The next few headings describe a framework for getting into the condition that will enable a CEO, the senior team and every employee to be fit and ready for excellent performance. There are seven elements to the framework:

**Purpose** – a sense of why you are here

**Vision** – a clarity of direction

**Identity** – your roles and inner sense of 'Self'

**Passion** – your values that really drive you to action

**Beliefs** – your ideas about 'the way it is' and 'the way it should be'

**Talents & Gifts** – the power of your developed talents and natural gifts

**Choice** – your interpretations, perceptions and behaviours

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## Part One: The 7 Elements

**Authentic transformational leaders are able to answer the question: what is the purpose of your organisation?**

**A great leader must also be able to answer the question: what is the purpose of your life?**

**Authentic transformational leaders understand what Vision is, and what makes a Vision develop its own relentless momentum towards fulfilment; whether it is a right vision or a flawed one.**

### **Purpose**

Perhaps the toughest question for any individual to answer is *what is the purpose of your life?* If we ask a CEO to answer *what is the purpose of your organisation?* the answer is likely to be something to do with maximising shareholder value. This of course would be different in a voluntary or public sector organisation, but there is more and more pressure on public organisations to follow the mindset of the commercial world.

Jim Collins, one of the most highly regarded business thinkers of his generation, makes it unambiguously clear in his book *Built To Last* that this belief has been the Achilles heel of thousands of otherwise great organisations through history. Great organisations are driven by a great sense of purpose. Great leaders are driven by a great sense of purpose – and it is usually to make a difference, to add something lasting that will be a legacy.

### **Vision**

In our research we have found, somewhat over simplified here, three general approaches to what might be called vision.

There are executive teams – even CEOs – who have no idea where they are heading or really where they want to end up. They allow the market to drive their business and hope that they are reactive enough to respond properly. The larger percentage of small to medium enterprises fall into this category: product driven, niche focussed, reactive to market forces.

There are others who do know where they want their organisation to be but can't get there at the moment, so they have to constantly compromise on the vision to remain pragmatic in the marketplace. There are so many fires to fight and things that have to happen before it is possible to make the larger dream a possibility. Most leave their organisations long before the opportunity arises to

build the bigger vision.

There are those who have learned to stop at nothing to achieve the dream. Whatever the economic conditions, they drive away at a vision of the future, and the resources and opportunities that they need seem to fall into place. This does not happen without delays and disappointments but they seem to take these in their stride. The Vision seems to have a life of its own and is unstoppable. These are inspirational leaders.

**Authentic transformational leaders forge a powerful and unique sense of Identity for a business so that its position and brand in the market is unambiguous and undeniable.**

### **Identity**

An organisation's Identity is one of its greatest tangible assets.

For the sake of absolute clarity – identity does not mean the corporate logo and stationery set. Not in this context.

Identity is the highest expression of what the organisation is or what it wants to be. There is not space here for a thesis on brand development and brand management; but simple observation in the marketplace will convince all that brand matters. Coca Cola, Nike, VW, Body Shop, Carphone Warehouse, Nokia, Kelloggs, Heinz, Harley Davidson, Marriott – all know something about Identity.

Identity is not a logo. Identity is the foundation of a *way of being*.

Identity is nothing to do with size. It is to do with truth. A small enterprise can dominate its geography or niche with its Identity. A global player can capture the loyalty of a whole age group (every generation), just as Pepsi does.

**Authentic transformational leaders know how to unleash and focus passion in the workplace.**

### **Passion**

**Passions are the values that drive us to action.** One executive told us, *I may value honesty, but it does not inspire me to leap from my bed, energised to change the world in some way. Challenge, Adventure, Love – these are values that have the potential to drive me to extraordinary feats of courage and reserves of resilience.*

*These I am passionate about.*

Passion is finally out of the closet in business – even in the cool, emotionally temperate climate of Britain. Few serious organisational leaders can deny any more that the power in passion is almost invincible. Whether we look to the sports arena or to art, literature, science or just individual human achievement we see that just about every extraordinary result is driven by unleashed passion. Even in the tired and cynical world of business, leaders are acknowledging the impact that can be had when a group of individuals decide to do whatever it takes to make something happen against all the odds because they want to and because they believe.

The responsibility to generate passion for an idea, a product, a service or a whole business rests with the CEO. The tentacles of scepticism and cynicism are so pervasive in society that it takes a strong leader to cut through prevailing attitudes of ambivalence, apathy and negativity. Some people deal with delay, disappointment and disaster by developing a sceptical, cautious view of the world. Others use the same circumstances to develop resilience.

People – even people with a tendency to a negative mindset – are brimming with passion; leaders do not need to provide it but simply to unleash it. In most organisations, passion is deliberately capped. Enthusiasm is not rewarded. Caution is advocated. Mistakes are punished. Passion is slaughtered.

People have so much choice about where they work, for whom they work and how they work that, unless an organisation inspires them, the best will leave and the worst will stay and operate at half cock. Even if people do not resign – which many do – they will at least resign their willing consent.

People are now expecting that they will be able to marry (at least in part) their own values (or passions as we call them) with those of the organisation. No more grin and bear it. If an organisation does not meet the core values of its key people it loses them, literally. If an organisation does not meet the values of the workforce as a whole, it

loses their commitment.

**Authentic transformational leaders are the source of belief in the organisation and must often keep belief alive when there is no evidence – in other words be the catalysts of faith. Knowing how to do this is the single greatest gift of a great leader.**

### **Belief**

There is no risk of being over emphatic about the role that *beliefs* play in an organisation's potential for success. It is here – and sometimes here alone – that great things can happen or not.

Once again, we can learn from the great sporting heroes. The power of belief is the fuel that drives a champion. In the Centre Court at Wimbledon both finalists are capable of winning on talent. But it is in their belief that victory lies or vanishes.

Easy to see on a tennis court or a football pitch. Easy to dismiss in an organisational context. It is notable how popular sporting heroes are as conference speakers and after dinner entertainers; business leaders love to hear the tales of triumph over adversity. But they usually fail to take away anything more than the thrill of a tale well told; too often happier to be entertained by high achievers than learn from them.

Imagine being roped to a fellow climber on the face of a dangerous and testing mountain climb. Imagine that your fellow climber loses faith and starts to believe you are both about to face some disaster. As your colleague thinks, so reality will follow. Teams and organisations are the same. One chink in the armour and all are at risk of losing the belief that the vision is possible.

**Authentic transformational leaders realise just how much of a revolution this one belief will cause inside an organisation that is run on traditional training and development guidelines. Transformational leaders**

### **Talents & Gifts**

Different people are good at different things. Their skills and talents are different and their personalities are different. Every individual bring to the world, and to their work, different natural talents or gifts that can be unleashed for the good of all. Most organisational development and management training implicitly asks everyone to ignore their natural gifts and learn the core competencies that have been researched and analysed by

**must also recognise that there is no quicker or cheaper win for the organisation than unlocking people's natural talents – it unleashes passion, commitment and self-confidence at a stroke.**

some expert somewhere as necessary for the effective management and administration of the system.

However intelligent the research, and however logical the answers, and however compelling or comprehensive the training, people will not do (automatically) what they do not want to do. Most people can ride a bicycle; most people do not ride bicycles however. Most people do not ride bicycles because either they believe that they will get hurt doing so (they have a limiting belief) or they do not want to (in other words it is not one of their passions or values.)

Quiet, thoughtful, analytical personality types want to do what they are good at and not have to attend advanced presentation skills courses as stipulated by the HR team. Gregarious, articulate, adventurous inspirers will not necessarily want to apply the minutiae of project planning disciplines and will never be made to do so, however good the training. Perfecters will never be persuaded to facilitate visionary brainstorming sessions; and the creative personality types from the art and marketing department will never feel comfortable doing things by the book. Fine, if folk want to change and develop new personalities that's great but it is not within the gift of an organisation to make this happen.

As a potential transformational leader, we face one of many choices. We can continue to believe that our people must be flexible and committed enough to learn the talents and skills that we need or we can invest in making skilled people talented and talented people awesome in their contribution to the organisation. We do so by connecting individuals with their own Gifts and finding a value and use for these in our organisation. One way leads to depressed, confused and frustrated individuals, the other way leads to motivated, confident and committed individuals.

**Authentic transformational leaders know intimately the process behind their own Choices and secondly know, with real**

### **Choice**

Transformational leaders spend the larger proportion of their time simply understanding people and creating relationships. This may be with shareholders, customers, suppliers, colleagues – but it all comes down to

**insight, the process  
behind the Choices that  
other people make.**

relationships.

Key to understanding and therefore influencing people at the deepest level is to understand how each individual makes his or her Choices: choices about what to believe, who to trust, how to behave, how to feel in challenging situations, when to take risk, how to respond to the daily frustrations and disappointments of life and work.

One of the organising principles that underpin transformational leadership is the idea that human beings have infinite choice at every given moment of their lives. This is tough for most people to accept. However, the idea, when believed, puts us at the centre of our own world and removes the opportunity to blame others for our circumstances or results.

The three fundamental choices we have are choice about what things mean (our interpretation of events), our choice about how things make us feel, and our choice about what we do next. One way to remember this is to think about the IF before we Act – Interpret, Feel, Act.

If we accept – for this moment – that what we get is the automatic by-product of what we do, and what we do is the automatic by-product of how we feel, and that how we feel is the automatic by-product of how we interpret events ... it leads to the conclusion that we must master the way we interpret events. For example, if I interpret your lateness as lack of respect and your silence in the meeting as lack of interest, I may feel negatively towards you and my behaviour is unlikely to be warm and engaging. If I interpret your lateness as you being massively under pressure and your silence as thoughtfulness, I will behave differently towards you. My actions – my choices – are dictated by my feelings, which are dictated by the meaning I attach to events.

## **The 7 Elements & Brand**

We believe that the three levels Purpose, Vision and Identity represent the **brand promise** of an organisation.

Passion and Belief represent the **brand energy** that will be an indicator of the brand's strength in a market.

Talent and Choice represent the **brand delivery** or the meeting of promise with reality. A significant gap here is potentially catastrophic for a business.

## The 7 Elements – In Summary

Authentic Inspired leaders are leaders of people, not leaders of process. They are influencers of people, not influencers of task. They have a methodology for knowing and for influencing:

- The **Purpose** of the organisation
- The **Vision** of the organisation
- The **Identity** of the organisation
- The prevailing **Beliefs** of the people that will enable it or condemn it
- The dormant **Passions** and values in the people that are there to be unleashed
- The latent **Gifts** and talents in the people that are key to organisational achievement
- The **Choices** that people are making – to perform or not to perform

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## Part Two: The Framework In Action

Using The 7 Elements to drive clarity of Vision, Passion and Belief through a team or organisation is a three stage process:

**One: Elicit & Envision**

**Two: Communicate & Validate**

**Three: Educate & Integrate**

### **Phase One : Elicit & Envision**

A Leadership team may or may not have an absolute clarity of Vision. In either case it is critical to elicit what vision there is and create clarity about the gap between Current Reality & Desired Reality.

Together with colleagues, a transformational leader will envision the future and enough steps to the future to give key followers some belief in the dream.

The driving team will want to be crystal clear about the scale of the dream, the next steps and the energy required to make it happen.

The *content* or *outputs* of this phase become the core message for communicating to followers, allies and the wider world.

### **Phase Two : Communicate & Validate**

In a highly effective performance environment communication is more than the passing of information and knowledge. It is a process of dialogue between all parties.

Business leaders are generally poor at getting and checking validation of their communication missives. Getting validation is not the same as asking permission. It is about getting buy-in from those who need to hear and accept the message. The most effective way to achieve

this is to involve people in dialogue and to be seen to hear and respond to questions, queries, concerns and anxieties. Leaders who fear that validation is tantamount to seeking democratic 'permission' are operating from a position of mistrust and fear. Leaders do not seek *consent* to their vision, but they seek *commitment*.

### **Phase Three: Educate & Integrate**

If there is one key ingredient missing from almost every change programme except the exceptional ones it is the process of education. The most common mistake made in business education and training is the assumption that if people are trained in the required competencies they will use their new skills at work. This is manifestly not true. Not everyone who *can* ride a bicycle *does* ride a bicycle. Just having a capability does not mean people will utilise it.

The vital ingredient in a change programme is not retraining in new competencies but *learning how to develop the required mindset and attitude to live and be productive* in the new environment.

Integration comes when a business reorganises its business systems, processes and structures to enable the *new way* to be implemented efficiently. New attitudes will soon evaporate if people are expected to operate within the old system. In many cases – if empowered to do so – people will invent and develop appropriate processes to support the new way. Integrated in this way, new processes will quickly become part of the new culture; more readily adopted than if imposed – prior to or in place of a change of culture.

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## Guiding & Leading Change

Understanding and implementing this framework creates change – usually significant change. Change to how people think, change to how they behave and change to the results they achieve. It helps individuals and organisations break free from the ordinary and become exceptional.

It helps CEOs unleash the full Power that is latent within their organisation, and it taps into what can only be described as the Souls of the people within it.

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## Authentic Transformational Leadership – Self Audit

**The following is a summary of the qualities and behaviours that we have observed in our twelve-year programme of research and our coaching of high achieving CEOs.**

**Authentic Transformational Leaders can be recognised by their:**

- Passionate desire to change some aspect of their world;
- Ability to paint a compelling and realistic vision of the future which people relate to, believe in and contribute to achieving;
- Focus on developing winning individuals and teams of high self-belief and mutual support;
- Ability to coach and mentor others to perform consistently at high levels of excellence;
- Capability to facilitate personal and organisational change and development in the face of seemingly un-surmountable obstacles.

**While each leader has his or her own unique set of qualities, talents, style and personality, the major attributes that often make up Authentic Transformational Leaders include the abilities to:**

- Forge deep and lasting relationships with others who are committed to making an impact, be it in their company or organisation, their personal lives, their community or more widely;
- Enable others to:
  - Transform their personal effectiveness and develop their power to positively influence change;
  - Access high levels of courage and resilience

- when facing challenges and disappointments;
- Commit and contribute better to other individuals, their team, organisation or community and their family development;
  - See what to do and how to do it, enabling them to be who they really are;
  - Unleash the passion to do whatever it takes to make their dreams come true;
  - Build unshakeable belief in their dream in order for it to come true;
- Create conditions for the empowerment of their own people to increase their involvement in and ownership of their own and the organisation's development;
  - Identify the limiting patterns of thought, belief and behaviour that prevent people reaching their full potential;
  - Know how to interrupt old and limiting patterns of thinking and to create mental space for new thinking, the strength for new action, and the self esteem for a sustained commitment to excellence;
  - Coach and mentor others towards attaining a shared compelling vision;
  - Identify, develop and unleash the potential of individuals and groups;
  - Communicate clearly and creatively in linguistic terms;
  - Think creatively and see beyond current beliefs about the art of the possible;
  - Critically evaluate opportunities and current actions and to solve problems;
  - Identify and remove bureaucratic and cultural impediments to the process of change and the development of people's potential.

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## About The Author

Adrian Gilpin is Chairman of the Institute of Human Development. He is a performance coach and mentor for CEOs and business executives.

Adrian created the prestigious *Transformational Leadership* programme at the Institute of Directors' Centre for Director Development.

He is co-developer of the Aspell-Gilpin Profiler™ - which is based on the most tested and validated personality profiling instruments in the world, author of the best-selling book *Unstoppable – The Pathway to Living an Inspired Life* and creator of *Pathfinder* a strategic thinking tool that has been used as an integral part of major culture change programmes in large organisations throughout Europe and is now available to the general public.

Adrian leads the IHD's leadership research and programme development, mentors Chief Executives and top teams, and spends much of his time on conference platforms challenging the old models of corporate leadership and offering practical and inspiring alternatives for managing change in business and society. He regularly speaks on:

- Inspired Leader
- Inspired Coach
- Pathfinder – The Foundations of Change

Adrian and his senior colleagues also consult to large organisations that are implementing cultural transformation, and to entrepreneurial businesses that want to be the best in their field.

### **About The Institute of Human Development**

We believe that there is a shift of consciousness that is causing millions of people around the world to seek better ways to balance life with meaningful work, better ways to lead and manage sustainable enterprises, and better ways to build cohesive communities.

IHD seeks to play a part in this shift of consciousness by serving those who are looking for new ways to develop themselves, new ways to coach excellence in others and new ways to lead organisations and communities.

We have spent a decade engaging with thought leaders and learning from exemplary practitioners in the fields of personal development, high performance coaching and leadership. We believe that we can help you to transform the quality and impact of your life, team, enterprise or community. The IHD is an ideas factory – architects and distributors of ideas, learning tools and a process for change that is geared towards liberating individual potential and transforming organisational results.

The IHD's views and processes are rooted in a seven-year, £2.5 million research programme funded by Government and the private sector. The research studies the beliefs, values and behaviours of peak performers and high achievers in business.

Our leadership models and personal development concepts are drawn from a wide and rich base - we work with and study the thought-leaders in personal development, transformation, the psychology of achievement and leadership.

Founded five years ago by the Chairman the IHD is now consulted by business leaders from Times 100 companies and Government Departments including the MOD and leading business consultancies such as BDO Stoy Hayward and KPMG.

The IHD also consults to opinion-forming organisations including the Institute of Directors, CBI, Chartered Institute of Marketing, universities including Sheffield Hallam University, and government agencies including Training & Enterprise Councils and Business Links.

IHD has quickly established itself as a leading authority and practitioner in leadership coaching and development.

The IHD's highly acclaimed culture change programmes are being used by many of the Times 100 businesses and entrepreneurial companies.

IHD methodologies are also being embraced and used throughout schools and education authorities to support the personal development of teachers and educationalists.

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