

**THALES**  
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# INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP:

Six must-haves to develop  
inspirational talent within your  
organisation

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Enhance your potential



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## Executive Summary

For centuries academics and gurus have focussed on the topic of 'leadership' – what it is, how to develop personal leadership skills, the styles of leadership and the impact of good leadership. From our business experience the emphasis has begun to change. Not only do we need to think about how to develop our leaders, but we need to focus on what inspiration truly is and find our inner source of inspiration to enhance our leadership capability. We will always need leaders, but leaders now, more than ever need to inspire a change weary workforce to deliver more with less. The Oxford<sup>1</sup> dictionary defines inspiration as:

*'The process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, especially to do something creative.'*

This paper will explore this concept, but early on we will explore why we believe that Inspirational Leadership is more than a process, and why emotion is equally important. Inspirational Leaders today must engage more than just the minds of their followers; they need to engage their hearts as well.

Inspiration stimulates followers to reflect internally and when values are aligned, deep emotional drivers are engaged, the follower is moved and motivated to act and raise their level of performance to achieve higher goals. When two or more people are involved, Inspirational Leadership takes on a new dimension and inspiration becomes leadership with impact; it becomes a living unseen flow of ideas and emotions between two or more minds and/or hearts. The emotional connection fuels a desire to overcome challenges and achieve new stimulating results which deliver a sense of achievement. These powerful emotions inspire the givers and receivers to act collectively towards a common goal. This goal may be a small step change or a transformational movement. Inspirational Leadership engages people by tapping into their motivation and inspiring flow, creativity, innovation and coordinated action.

We believe John Quincy Adams' (6th US President) definition of leadership is more aligned to our thinking on Inspirational Leadership:

*'If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more you are an [inspirational] leader'*

In this paper we will explore the topic of Inspirational Leadership; together we will travel through the landscape of ideas that have inspired the thinking behind leadership development both past and present. The author has also drawn from her experience as a leader in the military and as a consultant in the business of leadership and organisational development to enrich the discussion.

It is hoped that in reading this paper you will gain an understanding of the essence of inspiration, find a definition of Inspirational Leadership that works for you and understand why it is important in today's business world. The paper looks at how Inspirational Leadership impacts organisational performance and presents a model for the reader to consider how Inspirational Leadership leads to organisation maturity. A deeper understanding of Inspirational Leadership is presented through a reflection on what we can learn from history plus the more modern field of neuroscience. The importance of being different and bold is explained through a reflection on world leaders and reference to famous speeches to demonstrate how to engage the hearts of followers. Finally the paper outlines six things to think about when designing an Inspirational Leadership Development Programme before presenting conclusions on the topic and a review of what this means for you.

## Why is Inspirational Leadership Important?

Today's businesses are constantly grappling with challenging business targets. Leaders are trying to deliver these targets in a competitive world that is constantly changing, developing and moving. New disruptive technology introduces a step change in competitive advantage every day. People are also on the move constantly, teams form and reform and companies are on the hunt for talent. In this context HR Departments and L&D Professionals need to evolve with business needs if they are to be useful. New thinking is needed on how to develop our most talented employees and keep them in our businesses.

- **But what is new in the field of leadership development?**
- **Where should we be focussing our efforts in the current globalised, digital and complex world?**

In this paper we will be exploring these questions and building on known best practice in leadership development. We will also be explaining why 'inspiration' and 'Inspirational Leadership' is a critical success factor for business success.

Inspirational Leadership inspires action, significantly raises individual and team performance levels and ignites creativity and audacious innovation. It truly unlocks latent potential by tapping into our inner motivation and values and inspiring people to follow their passion and move towards ambitious goals. In our experience, inspired and motivated people and teams deliver significant impact on organisational performance.

## Can we all become Inspirational Leaders?

Everyone has the ability to become an Inspirational Leader; all we need to do is unlock our inspirational potential and find an opportunity to demonstrate our capability. We all have an inspirational blueprint and style which will be unique to each person. However there are skills which we can learn, grow and develop to increase our impact on our followers. It is important to understand from the start, that becoming an Inspirational Leader requires focussed effort, practice and an ability to conduct self-reflection. Inspiration is personal; our source of inspiration is closely linked to our beliefs, values and identity. Inspirational Leadership is a mindset and a skill. It should be thought of as an action orientated mindset where one individual can ignite a fire in another person's heart and/or mind, and move a person or team of people to take action and achieve something greater than the current status quo.

An example would be the person who watches a friend complete a marathon along with 10,000 other people and feels a wave of admiration, excitement and enthusiasm at the sacrifice and hard work their friend has achieved and all for a moving cause. The observer feels a drive to sponsor or even go further and sign up to do a marathon the next year. This is inspiration at work. Significant action takes place often without the source of the inspiration even knowing (the marathon runner in this case).

This is a fascinating topic and a topic which is open for exploration and contribution by those interested in understanding more. This white paper starts the journey of exploration by looking first at the essence of inspiration itself, where the reader will be introduced to empowerment, trust, accountability, authentic leadership, leadership ethos and teaming. Inspirational Leadership in itself is great, but has limited use in the workplace if it has little impact on the organisation. With this in mind we explore what Inspirational Leadership means for organisation performance and why it is important. Topics such as diversity, respect, authenticity and talent will be explored in the context of inspiration and organisational development. We will also be looking at two important leadership philosophies which support the Inspirational Leadership mindset – Servant Leadership and Followership.

We will also consider what history can teach us about Inspirational Leadership, and what we can learn from the military on how to inspire employees and develop high performing teams. The concept and importance of mission command and leadership styles is then explored and a discussion is presented on which style generates the most inspiration.

No paper today would be complete without a review of the link between inspiration and neuroscience. This, combined with a reflection on what we can learn from Churchill about how he inspired a nation to action through empowering speeches, takes the reader on to a reflection of the importance of emotions, attachment theory and psychological safety, to inspirational leadership development and application in business. The paper concludes with a reflection of the latest thinking about teams. The concept of 'Teaming' is introduced and teaming skills are discussed in the context of why our leaders today should have teaming skills in their portfolio of capabilities. These skills are critical to survival in the complex world we operate in today. To demonstrate Inspirational Leadership in action, we explore this in a unique way with a speech that inspired a transformational movement across a nation.

The paper concludes with some ideas on how to develop inspirational skills through development centres, and encourages reflection on the importance of diversity, courage and the need to deliver inspiration in your own unique way.



## Inspiration in a VUCA world

Every organisation needs to move with the times. The world we live and work in today is constantly evolving, reshaping and changing. We are in the grip of a digital technological revolution which is making the rate of change exponential. The consequence of this growth is that the environment we work in every day is often Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA). In fact the term VUCA actually comes from the US Military approach to military operations. The military recognise the world we operate in is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous and train their leaders to command in this environment. The world of business has similar parallels.

- Is your business volatile and constantly changing?
- Do you face uncertainty in your daily work?
- Is your business operation complex?
- Do your leaders need to understand how to perform and deal with ambiguity?

If this resonates with you, then Inspirational Leadership will add value to your business world.

Today's leaders face the daily challenge of how to navigate this complex world and lead their followers to successful outcomes. Enthusiastic waves of employees join companies every day and expect to see rapid career progression. We live in a world that has an expectation of instant results. People see the path to life improvement as earning more money, and the route to this is to climb the corporate ladder, gain promotion and a higher wage. If this progression is too fast, disaster can strike. The leader has no idea what to do, acts with poor leadership skills and lacks the ability to inspire his/her followers. This is summed up in the '*Leader Poem*' by Roger McGough:

*I wanna be the leader  
I wanna be the leader  
Can I be the leader?  
Can I? I can?  
Promise? Promise?  
Yippee I'm the leader  
I'm the leader  
OK what shall we do?*

The follower becomes the leader, but he/she does not know how to lead, let alone how to be an Inspirational Leader. This is when inward reflection, combined with education on leadership and understanding of 'inspiration' is needed.

- But what causes us to become 'inspired' and what motivates us to act on this inspiration?
- How do we become Inspirational Leaders?

Read on and we will explore these questions.



## The essence of Inspirational Leadership

Any form of leadership that inspires a person to act either directly or through **empowerment** for the benefit of others and/or an organisation is Inspirational Leadership. For action to take place certain conditions must exist in interpersonal relationships. Two critical factors for success are **mutual trust** and the **ability of a leader to inspire others**. Leaders have a moral obligation to provide guidance, mentoring, coaching and resources to their teams. A leader should seek to empower their teams and create the conditions for individuals to use their initiative and judgement in the conduct of their work. In return followers have a duty to act with loyalty and discipline. Mutual trust is needed. Trust is a two way process, whether leader or led, it is created by living our **values** to professional standards and setting an appropriate example.

Steven Covey<sup>2</sup> describes Trust as a mixture of **Character and Competence**. Character is a combination of integrity and intent. Character can be developed and enhanced once leaders start to understand the importance of authenticity in leadership, and revealing vulnerabilities. Leaders also need to understand the importance of behaviours in role modelling and learn valuable techniques such as storytelling to enhance engagement skills., this will build character. Intent is more difficult to develop. This is guided by individual motivation and drivers, and can easily be detected by followers. Intent has an effect on the impact of leaders and their inspirational capability. Development programmes which include coaching can help leaders reflect on their intent and understand their impact on others. This interaction (visible and invisible) between leaders and followers is important and affects the relationship and trust in teams, which in turn affects the environment necessary for inspiration to flourish.

An Inspirational Leader is a role model guided by a set of morally sound **core values**. He/she behaves in a way that is aligned to the organisation's values and conducts his/her work in a **responsible and accountable way**. Such leaders constantly work to improve their leadership skills and deliver high **standards** of performance. They are **authentic leaders** who 'walk the talk' and inspire others to follow and raise their personal performance level to achieve greater outcomes.

Inspirational Leadership should be thought of as a **leadership ethos** that creates a climate where teams and individuals flourish. The **climate** people work in stimulates aligned action towards successful outcomes, people feel empowered, **teaming** is visible, **enthusiasm** is present and individuals are **committed** to the success of the organisation.

## Inspirational Leadership – impact on Organisation Climate, Performance and Maturity

**Organisational Culture** is the broad organisational values, norms and beliefs that shape an organisation. The culture of an organisation should be thought of as the atmosphere; the climate of an organisation is the more localised version of culture. **Climate** should be thought of as the local ‘weather’ people experience at a given point in time. Inspirational Leadership has a direct impact on the Climate of a team/localised organisation. Lots of mixed climates in turn impact the culture and consequently the organisational performance. If leaders create positive and engaging work climates they build a positive, innovative culture. These positive climates can create a movement, which at a certain tipping point will create enough momentum for an organisation to evolve, change and transform. Local positive Climates encourage teams to perform to higher levels. These climates in turn have an impact on the success of an organisation.

However, no leader works in isolation. Both good and bad leadership has a direct impact on the climate and culture of an organisation and its maturity. **But what does a mature organisation look like?** Over the years many academics have developed organisation maturity models. One such model was developed by *Frederic Laloux* in his publication *‘Reinventing Organisations’*. From our experience we believe that the ‘Teal’ organisation is the highest level of organisational maturity. Leaders who seek to build positive climates will generate enough momentum to help organisations move to a ‘Teal’ level. We believe that Inspirational Leadership is critical to reaching the ‘Teal’ level of maturity. We propose that this level is reached when Inspirational Leaders establish a good team climate, teams link up, inspiration and innovation spreads and this creates an innovative organisational culture.

<b>TEAL</b>	<b>EVOLUTIONARY. PURPOSE-DRIVEN.</b>	<p><b>Focus on inner integrity, sees systemically</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dis-identifies with own ego • purpose-driven • radical authenticity</li> <li>• inner rightness as compass</li> </ul>
<b>GREEN</b>	<b>PLURALISTIC. RELATIONSHIP-DRIVEN.</b>	<p><b>Fairness, community, equality of all perspectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Justice for all • consensus • relationship over outcomes • empowerment</li> <li>• values-driven culture • multi-stakeholder perspective</li> </ul>
<b>ORANGE</b>	<b>ACHIEVEMENT. RESULTS-DRIVEN.</b>	<p><b>Pragmatic, success-oriented, complex logic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Questions authority • get ahead • values freedom &amp; achievement</li> <li>• innovation • accountability • meritocracy</li> </ul>
<b>AMBER</b>	<b>CONFORMIST. ROLE-DRIVEN.</b>	<p><b>Awareness of social roles, following authority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absolute truth (black &amp; white) • can see other’s expectations • dogmatic</li> <li>long-term perspective • consistent process • size &amp; stability (hierarchy)</li> </ul>



- What level of maturity do you think your organisation is currently at?
- Where would you like to be?

Inspirational Leaders play an important role in organisational development. They are catalysts for development and growth. They create positive climates and raise organisational performance levels. They create business climates and cultures where inspiration thrives. The result is **agility, creativity and innovation driven by inspiration**. In today's complex world, an agile organisation will adapt, grow and progress. Laloux identifies these agile organisations as 'Teal Organisations' – evolutionary and purpose driven. The 'Teal' environment is open, honest, encourages risk taking, tolerates failure and learns fast. This sort of climate enables inspiration and innovation to flow and grow. This environment is enhanced by a **diverse workforce**, where ideas are openly shared, diversity is respected and people work effectively in teams. **Mutual respect** exists and individuals and teams are valued; people are aligned to the purpose of the organisation. Inspirational Leadership is the catalyst to make this happen.

The Inspirational Leader buys into the concept of working for the 'greater good' of the organisation and the need to be consistent in their approach, aligned to business goals and able to get people to collaborate in high performing teams. They suspend their ego, are purpose driven and acts according to an **inner moral compass** with **integrity and radical authenticity** which is aligned to the values of the organisation he/she works in. Does this happen in your workplace? Do you see leaders suspending their egos and working for the 'greater good' of the organisation? Do you see selfless commitment? These are all signs of Inspirational Leadership in action. Empowerment is at the heart of this **action-centred leadership style**. Values are clear and behaviour and actions are **aligned** to espoused values.

- Do your employees feel empowered or does your annual 'HR People Survey' constantly see comments like 'poor or lack of leadership', 'no empowerment' or 'ideas not listened to'?
- Do your leaders know your values?
- Do your leaders inspire your workforce and 'walk the talk'?

Leaders who create an **inspirational climate** increase organisational agility, creativity, innovation and competitiveness. **Teaming** is visible every day and organisations rise above competitors in the most complex and demanding circumstances. Leaders work to unlock everyone's potential to seize winning opportunities, however fleeting. Inspiration generates the **motivation to act** and **ignites** a fire that spreads to create an inspirational climate and eventually an inspirational culture. Nurtured and fuelled routinely, people who work in such climates gain the confidence to act boldly and independently in their daily challenges.

Leaders have a responsibility to maximise the potential of their teams and ensure that **talent** exists in the right place, at the right time to have the greatest impact. This requires leaders to be **authentic** and to know those they lead, to understand them, and to place the care of their followers at the forefront of all that they do. Their style is to act with a 'Servant Mindset' – this is the mindset that acts with humility, is authentic and open and supports their followers as much or as little as they need. 'Servant Leadership' is taught to young Army Officers at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst from day one. The motto on Army cap badges at Sandhurst is 'Serve to Lead'. Inspirational Leadership is not micro-management and over assurance and it is not about encouraging people to be reckless or to gamble; it is about accepting errors in the pursuit of calculated risk taking, boldness and initiative. Cultivating a Servant Leadership Mindset is important for any Inspirational Leader today.

## Inspirational Leadership – what can we learn from history?

In business life there are times when a Transactional (or Directive) 'Just do it!' telling/push style of leadership is required. These are often in the most demanding of circumstances e.g. Health and Safety or emergency scenarios. In these situations people often need to react instantly drawing on their skills, experience, judgement and training. However, for the majority of the time, leaders can aspire to be Transformational (or Inspirational) – and by achieving this, they will motivate their followers and inspire their team to achieve shared goals through shared **values, vision, trust and confidence**<sup>3</sup>.

Throughout history perfectly ordinary people have achieved extraordinary results. During the Second World War some of the best commanders proved to be people pulled from simple daily professions such as small business owners, carpenters and grocers. They displayed great character and acted with genuine intent, working to ensure the safety and survival of their followers. These people under extraordinary circumstances adapted, learnt fast and emerged as survivors and leaders. They inspired trust, confidence and communicated visions that generated belief in survival. The military develop leaders by focussing on their training and developing muscle memory through repeated practice to speed up responses in stressful situations. Practice and rehearsal (under as realistic conditions as possible) stretches soldiers and helps them to understand what to expect in those conditions. They learn how to manage themselves and still have some capacity to manage their teams. Daniel Goleman explains this concept in his Emotional Intelligence Model where we are told to start our leadership journey by becoming self-aware, we need to do this before we can manage ourselves and we then need to understand others before we can manage others. Starting with our own behaviour and self-awareness is the key.

Goleman also wrote an article for the Harvard Business Review: '*Leadership that gets results*'. In this article he drew from leadership research conducted by The Hay Group. This research identified six distinctive styles of leadership and their impact on the climate of the organisation, teams and individuals. Goleman stated each style springs from different components of Emotional Intelligence. The styles are<sup>4</sup>:

- *Coercive leaders* demand immediate compliance (Coercive Leadership Style).
- *Authoritative leaders* mobilise people toward a vision (Visionary Leadership Style).
- *Affiliative leaders* create emotional bonds and harmony (Affiliative Leadership Style).
- *Democratic leaders* build consensus through participation (Participative Leadership Style).
- *Pacesetting leaders* expect excellence and self-direction (Pacesetting Leadership Style).
- *Coaching leaders* develop people for the future (Coaching Leadership Style)

Goleman stated that the most effective leaders use a range of styles and adapt their style to suit the situation. His research indicated that Authoritative/Visionary Leaders were the most inspirational as they were:

- Visionary
- Motivational
- Have very clear purpose and standards
- Set the vision and then empower people to implement it and be innovative

Inspirational Leaders throughout history displayed several of the characteristics of the Authoritative/Visionary Leadership style, notably the ability to communicate a motivational vision with great clarity and create an environment that empowers people to do their own thinking and planning. In the military this is called '**mission command**' i.e. explain the mission (what is to be achieved) in terms of the desired effect/outcome and leave the commander to figure out how to get there. The ability of a commander to articulate a **clear vision/mission** is crucial to ensure clear understanding, aligned action, and creativity in the face of adversity.

## Inspiration and Neuroscience

Insights from Neuroscience can help us understand how leaders inspire others. Recent research has demonstrated the power of direct interactive relationships (what happens between brains) to shape and reinforce neural connections<sup>5</sup>. This concept is put to good use by 'TED Talk' specialists today. TED talk speakers communicate a unique idea with passion, clarity and link it to a real life narrative to help people connect to the idea. They are excellent storytellers. The good news is we can all learn to storytell – this is an art that just requires some explanation and practice! Once a connection (via a well-constructed story) is made in the brain, the seed is sown and the person listening to the idea begins to form **neural connections** and the idea takes root and grows in the receiver's brain. Inspirational Leaders are often great narrators and recruit people to their cause with ease. Winston Churchill was a master at public speaking, yet at school he struggled and actually learnt these skills later in life, proving we can all learn to give speeches through study and practice.

But what was **Churchill's** secret? How did he do this? Neuroscience explains this in a more scientific way than the traditional view of Churchill as an inherently charismatic speaker born with these skills. People react to Inspirational Leaders and speakers through affiliation and identifying with their causes. The leader's words and key phrases make people want to belong to, or reject, the leader and his/her cause. Inspirational Leaders are often radical, speak with passion and their vision is aligned to a cause which ignites emotions and forms connections with followers. **Tara et al (2015)** state that:

*'The ability to engage with others at the level of emotions, that 'thing' that happens between brains that is called 'affective' interaction is the critical component of inspiration'*

**Emotions** play an important part in inspiration. Inspirational Leaders feel and elicit powerful emotions around their cause and mobilise people to act. Emotional resonance is developed around the objects of **attachments**. It is important that the object of the attention and attachment remains something of benefit to the wider group or cause rather than the leader themselves.

Another concept that has been raised in recent thinking around neuroscience and emotions is that of **mirror neurons**, explained in the Goleman & Boyatzis' Harvard Business Review article *Social Intelligence and the Biology of Leadership*<sup>6</sup>. This article explains that Italian scientists found mirror neurons in the brain by accident when studying a particular cell in a monkey's brain that fired only when the monkey raised its arm. This concept is summed up in the quote from the article:

*'One day a lab assistant lifted an ice cream cone to his own mouth and triggered a reaction in the monkey's cell. It was the first evidence that the brain is peppered with neurons that mimic, or mirror, what another being does. This previously unknown class of brain cells operates as neural Wi-Fi, allowing us to navigate our social world. When we consciously or unconsciously detect someone else's emotions through their actions, our mirror neurons reproduce those emotions. Collectively, these neurons create an instant sense of shared experience.'*

This is an interesting discovery and explains some of the inspiration that develops in Elite Teams.

Geoffrey Webb, a former US attack helicopter pilot, provides some insight into the characteristics of elite teams in his blog - *The five Qualities of Elite Teams*. He identifies that these teams form deep bonds and that members inspire each other into action. From his military experience he believes the five qualities of an Elite Team are:

1. Deep Trust
2. High Standards
3. Strong Commitment
4. Worthwhile Purpose
5. Shared Suffering

Number five – shared suffering is rooted in shared experience in tough scenarios. Linking this to Goleman & Boyatzis' article, we believe mirror neurons could reproduce the emotions that create deep bonds in such teams. Goleman and Boyatzis go on to explain:

*'Mirror neurons have particular importance in organizations, because leaders' emotions and actions prompt followers to mirror those feelings and deeds. The effects of activating neural circuitry in followers' brains can be very powerful... It turns out that there's a subset of mirror neurons whose only job is to detect other people's smiles and laughter, prompting smiles and laughter in return. A boss who is self-controlled and humorless will rarely engage those neurons in his team members, but a boss who laughs and sets an easygoing tone puts those neurons to work, triggering spontaneous laughter and knitting his team together in the process. A bonded group is one that performs well... Fabio Sala has shown in his research... that top-performing leaders elicited laughter from their subordinates three times as often, on average, as did midperforming leaders. Being in a good mood, other research finds, helps people take in information effectively and respond nimbly and creatively. In other words, laughter is serious business.'*<sup>6</sup>

Neuroscience has also helped us to understand more about the influence of our environment, the positive rewards of attachment emotions when we feel we belong, and the negative effects of fear, disgust and shame when we are rejected or fear rejection. Amy Edmondson (Novartis Professor of Leadership and Management – Harvard Business School) reinforces this thinking in her concept of **‘Psychological Safety’**<sup>7</sup> and explains why this is critical to **‘Teaming’**. The term psychological safety describes a climate in which people feel free to express relevant thoughts and feelings. This is critical to allow people to be authentic, reveal vulnerabilities and gain trust for the creation of inspirational climates that allow teams to flourish. Amy explains:

*‘Teaming, coined deliberately to capture the activity of working together, presents a new, more flexible way for organizations to carry out interdependent tasks. Unlike the traditional concept of a team, teaming is an active process, not a static identity. Imagine a fluid network of interconnected individuals working in temporary teams (in a psychologically safe environment) on improvement, problem solving and innovation. Teaming blends relating to people, listening to other points of view, coordinating action and making shared decisions... Teaming calls for the development of affective (feeling) and cognitive (thinking) skills.’*

Inspirational Leaders create learning organisations, enable teaming and develop psychologically safe environments which foster innovation. Businesses today need to innovate if they are to evolve and survive in the competitive world. Inspirational Leaders are the catalysts at the heart of this evolution.

## Inspiration – be different and be bold

Inspirational Leadership can be seen in action throughout history in many famous speeches that changed the world<sup>8</sup>. Speeches which included engaging and unforgettable phrases which stick in our memory and are easily recalled – for example:

- Abraham Lincoln ‘Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation...’ *The Gettysburg Address, 9th Nov 1863*
- Malcolm X ‘You can’t hate the roots of a tree, and not hate the tree’, *14th Feb 1965*
- Jawaharlal Nehru ‘At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom’ *Tryst with Destiny Speech, 4th Aug 1947*
- Marie Curie ‘The scientific history of radium is beautiful’ *On the discovery of radium’, 14th May 1921*
- Winston Churchill ‘I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat’ *House of Commons Speech, 13th May 1940*
- Nelson Mandela ‘I am the first accused’, *20th Apr 1964 and ‘Free at Last’, 2nd May 1994*

The essence of inspiration can be seen in the emotional connection these leaders made in their speeches. Carefully prepared words, delivered with humility, confidence, boldness and faith in the name of the cause the leader was defending stirred the hearts and minds of millions of people. These speeches are easy to find and they still have resonance today. The leaders spoke of principles such as equality, hope, dreams, freedom and pride. The underlying message from these leaders is that you need to suspend your own ego and agenda and work for the greater good, only by doing this will you achieve your true goal and the collective dream.

Martin Luther King Jr’s speech ‘I have a dream’ at the *Lincoln Memorial, Washington on 28th Aug 1963* was one of the most memorable speeches of all time. He delivered his speech with passion, power, boldness and a firm commitment to the cause of freedom and human rights. He truly believed that diversity is valuable and difference should be appreciated and despite threats on his life he had the courage to speak up. He openly lived his values, walked the talk and engaged the hearts of millions. Elements of his inspiring speech are below. I encourage you, the reader, to reflect on his words.

- How did Martin Luther King Jr create such powerful sentences?
- How did he appeal to people’s hearts?
- How did he mobilise people to action?
- What can you learn from reflection on poetry and speeches such as this famous oration?

*'Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves, who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity..*

*But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination..*

*Let us not wallow in the valley of despair, I say to you today, my friends. And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream...*

*I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal...*

*I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood...*

*I have a dream that even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an Oasis of freedom and justice...*

*This is our hope. This is the faith that I will go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom, knowing that we will be free one day. And this will be the day when all of God's children, will be able to sing with new meaning, 'My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring?...*

*And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring in every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last, free at last'*

Martin Luther King Jr displayed courage and boldly spoke out about freedom. He appealed to the human heart and managed his own fears for his life. He suspended his ego and pushed on to make things happen. He did lose his life in the end in dramatic circumstances and for anyone who wishes to understand this inspirational man more, we recommend a trip to the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, USA. Stand in the very room he spent his last moments and you will understand how courageous he was to step out on the balcony where he was assassinated on that fatal night in 1968.

- **So what can we learn from history?**
- **What can we emulate and how can we inspire our followers emotionally to act towards a common cause?**
- **Think about the people around you, who do you want to inspire today?**
- **How are you going to achieve this?**

Inspiration is as old as the hills and as needed today as ever, to meet the challenges we face in today's world. We can learn a lot by looking back at history and finding our own Inspirational role models and reflecting on what made them inspirational.

We challenge you to think about how you can become an Inspirational Leader and how you can be different and bold.

## Recommendations for the development of Inspirational Leadership in your business

It is important to have a **'Growth Mindset'** when organisations seek to develop the Inspirational Leadership Skills of their leaders. This is a mindset that says we can grow, we can change, we can be different and we can be better at what we do. All we need is access to some good development opportunities!

It is also important that any development programme seeking to engage the hearts and minds of delegates is inspirational in its content and the environment it is delivered in. Below you will find six recommendations derived from lessons learnt from our practical experience of delivering such programmes.

We would recommend starting with the individual skills of the leaders and then through a process of coaching and mentoring, work with these leaders to establish a psychologically safe environment where inspiration thrives. Then focus on the collective mindset of your teams, develop 'Teaming Skills' and combine psychometrics with training on thinking skills to open minds. Creative and Problem Solving skills are important to help the leader deliver new creative and innovative solutions to business challenges. Encourage diversity, respect, trust, and develop frameworks to understand how to monitor performance and progress.

In our experience there are six key things to think about when developing an Inspirational Leadership programme:

1. **The Environment.** This should be inspiring in itself. If an organisation wants to stimulate creativity and reflection on personal inspirational skills it is recommended that any face-to-face event takes place in an interactive, multi-sensory and inspiring environment.
2. **Blended learning programmes.** Programmes should be designed using a range of tools and delivery methods to stimulate thinking. Pre-course could include research and preparation of a presentation on personal role models who inspire delegates, completion of psychometrics, identification of inspirational environments delegates have worked in before, and what is it about that environment that inspired them. Post-course work could be 1:1 coaching, Action Learning Sets, follow-up webcasts and videos/eLearning.
3. **Face-to-face events.** These should include an opportunity to reflect on personal role models and why they inspire individuals. Explaining to delegates how to model excellence is another great tool. This can then be applied in the inspirational environment to encourage the delegates to observe, listen, describe and model Inspirational Leaders. Inspirational Toolkits providing a range of practical hints, tips and techniques to practice back in the workplace, are also helpful. This should be presented in a dynamic, interactive and memorable way to engage delegates and demonstrate how inspiration creates flow and learning.
4. A range of **core topics** could be explored via workshops, such as:
  - a. Trust
  - b. Accountability
  - c. Leadership Styles
  - d. Neuroscience & Communication
  - e. Modelling Excellence
  - f. Thinking Skills
  - g. Teaming
  - h. Psychological Safety
  - i. Inspirational Leadership Models
  - j. Reflection on the Inspirational Leadership behaviours/skills/values
  - k. Exploration of values such as courage, discipline, respect, integrity, authenticity, diversity, loyalty, selfless commitment
  - l. Inspirational Culture/Climate: Innovation, creativity, risk taking, empowerment, learning
  - m. Inspirational Psychology & Emotional Intelligence
5. **Support.** Introducing a coaching and/or mentoring framework to an organisation will enable delegates to find coaches and mentors to support their development. This ensures that the decision to begin to develop Inspirational Leadership skills is sustained and nurtured to obtain positive results for the organisation.
6. **Speakers.** Inspirational Leaders could also make an appearance and give a speech during the event or in an organised evening event designed to inspire attendees.

## So... what does all this mean for you?

Inspiration is a hot topic and a topic every leader involved in Talent Management, Learning and Development and leadership should reflect upon. People today are weary from constant change and feeling the pressure of having to do more with less. We are asking a lot of our leaders and it is time to get smarter and understand how to inspire others to action and to start talking about how to lead people through an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous business world.

The business world needs Inspirational Leaders, but Inspirational Leaders do not just miraculously appear to lead us to great achievements. It is important to recognise that any programme embarking on the development of leadership skills should include a core component which enables reflection on the essence of inspiration. Leaders need to be allowed time to think about, discuss, explore and reflect on what inspiration means to them and how they can develop their own personal Inspirational Leadership skills. We can learn by reflecting on great leaders and role models for inspiration. Learning how to reflect and model excellence is an important skill which will enable leaders to continue the journey of reflection and discover and develop their own personal style.

Development programmes which take place in inspirational environments combined with expert facilitation are great to start this journey of self-reflection. When combined with the introduction of leadership toolkits (methods, techniques and models to understand leadership) and inspiring talks from role models, inspiration begins to flow. Once leaders start to understand the essence of inspiration, it is good to follow-up with a mix of theory such as inspiration and neuroscience, psychological safety, teaming and leadership styles as well as the value of diversity and trust.

The leaders should then act as role models within the organisation and set about creating a climate that allows inspiration to flow and galvanises people to action. The importance of coaching should also not be underestimated. Good executive coaching will embed behaviours and plays an important part in delivering accountability and change.

Inspirational Leadership should always be placed in the context of its impact on Organisational Performance and the level of maturity the organisation wishes to reach. All of this, combined with a reflection on what we can learn from history and inspirational role models, will stimulate our talented employees to reflect on how to inspire others; by finding their own source of inspiration they will be moved to action and uncover a desire to grow their own personal Inspirational Leadership capability.

Finally we can never underestimate the importance of education in the development of our leaders. Inspirational Leadership should be developed just like any other form of leadership, but in its very nature the learning event should be inspiring, engaging, motivating and memorable. We recommend that the content of this paper is reflected on and any development programme includes the elements described above.

Nelson Mandela rounds off our paper with his famous quote about education:

*'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'*

Now we challenge you!

- **What will you do today, tomorrow and next week to educate your talented employees, develop their Inspirational Leadership capability and engage their hearts to inspire those around them?**
- **How will you start to develop your own personal inspirational capability?**
- **What would an Inspirational Leadership culture and an inspirational climate look like for you or your company?**

We hope this paper has been useful and stimulated your thinking and we would be happy to hear your views, after all inspiration is useless if it doesn't create flow and connection. If you feel inspired with an idea, feel free to inspire others by sharing it.



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Further information about Frederic Laloux's book 'Reinventing Organisations' can be found at [www.reinventingorganizations.com/contact](http://www.reinventingorganizations.com/contact)

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