

TRIED & TESTED

THE LANDMARK FORUM

Is it really possible to positively and permanently impact the quality of your life in just three days? That's the bold claim of Landmark Worldwide, an international company that runs advanced programs and seminars on relationships, communication, productivity and leadership. *Irish Tatler Man* sent along two trusty guinea pigs to find out and report back

WHAT IS IT?

Landmark Worldwide defines itself as "an international personal and professional growth, training and development company". Look it up online, however, and you'll find it described as everything from "profound" to "life-changing."

The company itself describes its programmes as "ontological and phenomenological", while Deborah Beronet-Miller, the Director of Public Relations at Landmark says: "Our programmes are grounded in a model of transformative learning which, unlike informative learning—which adds to what you know and brings new knowledge to an existing worldview and frame of reference—gives you an awareness of the basic structures in which you know, think and act. Once you gain that awareness, you're able to think and act beyond existing views and limits."

The Landmark Forum, one of its most popular seminars, is an accelerated self-help programme – which is held over three days and one evening – that aims to facilitate one's awareness of existing views and limits, recalibrate an individual's concept of what's possible and, ultimately, facilitate self-improvement.

While it might sound like a load of hot air, its alumni includes numerous business

leaders, many of whom have waxed lyrical about its profound and transformative impact, while several blue chip companies, such as LuluLemon, pay for their staff's participation in the courses. There's also the small (sic) matter of more than two million people that have participated in Landmark's programmes over the last two decades. Surely that many can't be wrong?

WHO IS IT SUITABLE FOR?

Anyone open to the possibility of changing their outlook on life and their behaviour.

WHAT DOES IT ENTAIL?

The Landmark Forum is an intense three-day course, where people are encouraged to experiment with fresh behaviours and ideas to improve the quality of their relationships and the manner in which they enjoy their lives.

This particular course, which was held at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Santry, Dublin 9, was led by a formidable American, Gale LeGassick, who directed proceedings with military precision, speaking at length and, at various intervals, inviting any of the 150 or so participants up to the stage to stand at a microphone and share their views and

experiences. It sounds daunting, admittedly, but there is no shortage of attendees with raised hands, anxious to speak and, in the process, allow the others to benefit from their own unique perspective.

While speaking at the microphone is not essential, attendees' full participation and honesty are crucial, enabling participants to hold a magnifying glass up to their lives, pinpoint the areas where they have been "inauthentic" or lacking in integrity, and examine their own particular "rackets" – unproductive behavioural patterns that prevent them from approaching a situation or predicament with an unblinkered and unbiased perspective.

Make no mistake: the three consecutive days – typically a Friday and a weekend – are exhausting and intense – 13 hours each day – and with just two brief breaks and 90 minutes for supper. Assignments are carried out during the breaks and at the end of each day, leaving little, if any, time for R&R.

Landmark's rules are few but rigid. Concise time-keeping is essential, which ensures that each day kicks off at gam precisely. In the seminar room eating is prohibited and water is the only drink to be consumed.

Note-taking, meanwhile, is discouraged during the Forum, not because of any confidentiality concerns

regarding the course material, but because participants are encouraged to give their undivided attention to the seminar leader and/or the individual on the stage who has volunteered to share his or her story. This, it transpired, is not an exercise in mental voyeurism but, in fact, an incredibly insightful way of helping participants to acknowledge the existence of "blind spots" or illogical behaviour in their thought process and actions.

By observing the process of a fellow participant struggling to cope with a situation in their own life and then, with LeGassick's skilful promptings, confronting the issue, it facilitates other attendees to imagine themselves going through the exact same process. It's invariably emotional, often with tears, but seems to produce dramatic effects.

Once a topic has been covered, the participants are often asked to turn to their neighbour and share their respective interpretations, what they have learned and, ultimately, how it affects them and how they might apply the principles to their respective lives. It's daunting initially but quickly becomes second nature and, depending on who you are sitting beside, often a fascinating and rewarding exercise.

As for the course content, each day typically sees LeGassick covering concepts and challenging pre-conceived



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ideas in a thoroughly engaging and frequently humorous manner. Topics range from treatment and behaviour in childhood through to personal relationships and matters involving working life.

LeGassick's oratory skills, which are often complemented by drawings on a whiteboard that aid in illustrating particular concepts, ensure that, despite the lengthy duration of each day, the majority of attendees remain utterly engaged.

PRICE:

€415, which covers the three-day seminar and a follow-on course of 10 three-hour evening

seminars that are held weekly following the seminar.

VERDICT:

A potentially life-changing course, The Landmark Forum is not for the faint-hearted. Those that participate will need to be open to take on fresh views and interpretations, look at themselves and their treatment of others with an honest perspective and, ultimately, have the conviction to follow through with what they have learnt during the seminar.

The course is, needless to say, not for everyone and can, for some, be tiring and emotionally draining. Results,

however, which were shown to be incredibly positive and wide-reaching, would suggest that participants get out, with interest, what they put in.

Indeed, for those seeking what Landmark Worldwide gives the umbrella term of a 'breakthrough' in any area of their life – whether it be personal, financial, business or any area in between – this three-day course can be an incredibly powerful tool that can empower them to choose their future behaviours and, in the process, relinquish their destructive, or at least unconstructive, behavioural patterns of the past. 

Landmark, Tel: +44 (0)20 7969 2020; landmarkworldwide.com