HITEC EMERGING EXECUTIVE PROGRAM

Leading with Authenticity and Purpose

RICK PIÑA

HITEC EEP 2026 • October 6, 2026

RICK PIÑA

THE NEXT HOUR

Two words every leader claims. Few leaders live them.

AUTHENTICITY

Who you are, in every room, at every level.

PURPOSE

Why you are here, and what only you can do.

LEADERSHIP

Where you take people because of both.

AUTHENTICITY

THE PREMISE

Your power is in your authenticity.

People will know when you are being fake.
Don't try to be someone you are not.

Speak from a place of genuine self.
That is when your words carry weight.

Influence is the currency of leadership.
And people only give influence to someone they trust.

AUTHENTICITY

Too many of us leave part of ourselves at the door.

76%
of Latino professionals say they hold back parts of who they are at work.

17% vs 8%
Our share of the U.S. workforce. Our share of STEM jobs.

5.4%
of Fortune 500 board seats. In a $3.6 trillion Latino economy.

Sources: Coqual, Latinos at Work (2016); Pew Research Center (2021); LCDA Latino Board Monitor (2023); LDC U.S. Latino GDP Report (2024)

RICK PIÑA

AUTHENTICITY

WHAT BEING YOU GIVES BACK

Being you is not a risk.
It is a return.

FOR YOU

Freedom. You stop trying to be someone you are not.

FOR YOUR TEAM

Trust. People are drawn to genuine.

FOR YOUR BOSS

Honor, not flattery. The truth, said with respect.

FOR THE COMPANY

What only you bring. They did not hire a copy.

AUTHENTICITY

THE PRESSURE COMES OFF

Take off Saul's armor.

You do not have to impress anyone.
Know who you are, and the pressure to perform goes away.

Don't be less to appease them.
Don't be more to impress them. Just be you.

Your mental health is part of your leadership.
Pretending is exhausting. Peace is on the other side.

RICK PIÑA

AUTHENTICITY

FIVE MINUTES

Let's talk about it.

01 Where have you worn Saul's armor at work?

02 What did it cost you?

03 What would change if you took it off tomorrow?

AUTHENTICITY

AI can write the code.
It cannot be you.

Skill is common. Trust is rare.
AI makes technical skill cheaper every quarter.

Business is done with people.
People pick the person they know and trust.

Programs come and go. Who you are does not.
The world did not design you. It cannot define you.

AUTHENTICITY

WHAT IT IS NOT

Being authentic does not mean...

...showing up unprepared.
Your preparation will show in your performance.

...saying everything you feel.
Controlled passion. Tempered disappointment.

...ignoring the room.
Adjust your style. Never change who you are.

AUTHENTICITY

KNOW WHO YOU ARE

If you don't know who you are, others will tell you.

Nobody else gets to draw your boundaries.
Once you know who you are, others cannot define you.

You will know what you need.
Know your assignment, and you know what to ask for.

You walk in the authenticity of your assignment.
Not a copy of someone else's.

RICK PIÑA

AUTHENTICITY

WHERE I COME FROM

Your story is not baggage.
It is your authority.

MY STORY

Born in Brooklyn in 1972. First in my family born in the United States. My mother came from the Dominican Republic in 1970.

No one is going to give you anything. If you want it, you have to go get it.

AUTHENTICITY

If you never get noticed, you will not get promoted.

Keeping your head down is not a strategy.
Nobody promotes work they cannot see.

Telling your story is not bragging.
It is giving decision makers the facts.

Find a sponsor, not just a mentor.
A mentor talks to you. A sponsor talks about you.

AUTHENTICITY

What if your boss wants you to be someone you are not?

Settle your values before the pressure comes.
Know what you will not trade before the offer.

Disagree with respect.
Speak the language of respect, and you keep your seat.

Your audio must match your video.
What you say and what you do have to line up.

AUTHENTICITY

Your growth will make some people uncomfortable.

Their insecurity is not your problem.
You are not responsible for how others feel about your success.

Don't dim your light.
Humble, yes. Small, no.

Let their opinion be too light to move you.
Give more weight to who you are than to what they say.

AUTHENTICITY

Your value does not drop because they cannot see it.

Courage is speaking up anyway.
The fear is real. Speak despite it.

Vulnerability is not weakness.
Showing your true self takes strength.

Keep people around who keep you real.
Friends who tell you when you are off course.

PURPOSE

Purpose predates presence.

Nobody else can run your assignment.

FIND IT

Name the assignment you were born with.

FOLLOW IT

Order your life around it, not around applause.

FINISH IT

Started is not the same as completed.

That is what success actually is.

PURPOSE

Your zone of genius is what only you can do.

PASSIONS

What would you do all night for free?

TALENTS

What does your best friend say you are good at?

VALUES

What matters more to you than money?

SKILLS

What tools has every season handed you?

Framework: Elaine Welteroth, Zone of Genius

RICK PIÑA

PURPOSE

TWO MINUTES

Write it down.
One line each.

01 **The work I would do for free:**

02 **The gift others see in me before I see it:**

03 **The value I will not trade for a promotion:**

04 **The one thing only I can do on my team:**

PURPOSE

You do not live it out all at once.

Times. Seasons. Levels. Stages.

MAXIMIZE IT

Work this stage with a spirit of excellence. Be the best in the building at what you are doing right now.

DISCERN IT

Know when the stage is finished with you, so you can cross to the next level on time.

RICK PIÑA

LEADING

EVERY LEVEL

The level changes.
You do not.



Framework: Myron Golden, The Four Levels of Value

LEADING

Same person.
Three directions.

DOWN

Every person on your team is proud to call you their leader.

OUT

Your peers know you as the one who keeps every division rowing the same way.

UP

You give each executive what they need, in the format they need it.

Translate the message. Never translate yourself.

LEADING

AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Don’t connect just to check a box.

When your network moves, it is expanding.
Leaders leaving put a friend inside a new company.

Use the 30-day rule.
Give them 30 days to settle in, then a genuine check-in.

Tend the relationship, not the transaction.
Give the relationship room before you give it an ask.

RICK PIÑA

LEADING

A STORY

Purpose will send you where nobody knows you yet.

THE ADVICE

Half the generals come from Fort Bragg. You already know those people. The other half come from Fort Hood. None of them know you. That is where you are going.

The people who already know you are in the bag. Go meet the ones who don't.

RICK PIÑA

LEADING

BRING ALL OF YOU

When one of us rises, we all rise.

You are here because someone reached back.
Name them. Then be that person.

Bring all of you into the room.
Your story. Your family. Your culture. Your faith.

You may be the first. Do not be the last.
Push up, pull up. Climb, then reach back.

RICK PIÑA

THE MIRROR

Five questions to take home.

- **Where am I still wearing Saul's armor?**
- **Does my team see the same person my executives see?**
- **What matters more to me than money, and do my calendar and my choices prove it?**
- **Am I maximizing this stage, or is this stage finished with me?**
- **Who am I reaching back for?**

THE CHARGE

Be who you are. On purpose.

Find it.

Follow it.

Finish it.

RICK PIÑA

LET'S TALK

Questions?

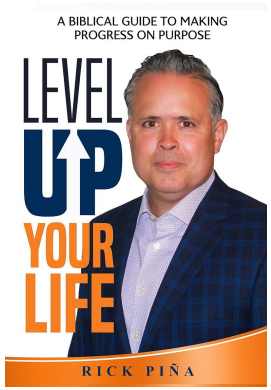
RICK PIÑA COO and CRO, Inspired Solutions, Inc.

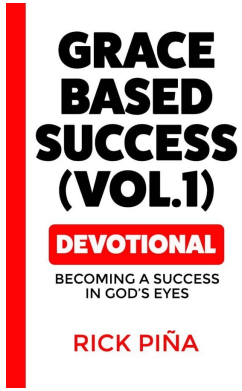
EMAIL rpina@inspired-us.com

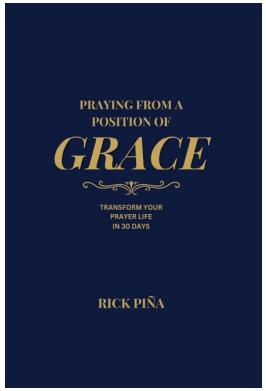
LINKEDIN linkedin.com/in/rickpinaofficial

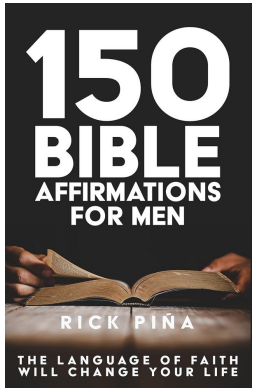
KEEP GROWING

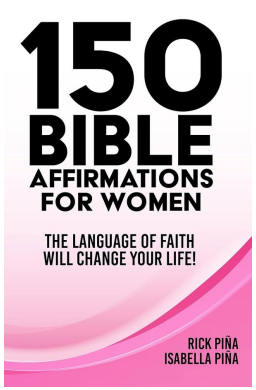
Take the conversation home with you.











rickpina.co

HITEC EMERGING EXECUTIVE PROGRAM

BONUS SLIDES:

lessons from the talk that are not in the deck

RICK PIÑA

15 bonus slides • HITEC EEP 2026

RICK PIÑA

BONUS 1

FROM LESSON 1

Personal Mastery
Comes Before Platform

- Leadership is influence, and it starts with you working on you.
- Personal mastery is required to become the person your people deserve.
- If you are paid to lead, make yourself worthy of the position.
- If people let you speak into their lives, be worthy of that investment.

BONUS 2

FROM LESSON 2

Everyone Imitates First.
Then You Find Your Voice

Children imitate whoever raises them.

At a new company we try to fit in, sound alike, and dress alike. That is understandable.

At some point you have to learn your own voice.

You cannot make real impact as a carbon copy.

Do it the right way and people will receive it, because they respect it.

BONUS 3

FROM LESSON 5

Gleaning
Is Not Copying

- Learn from as many leaders as you can.
- Glean the specifics: how they introduce themselves, how they write an email, how they close one.
- You can glean from many people without losing who you are.
- The goal is your own voice, not a carbon copy.

BONUS 4

FROM LESSON 7

Whatever You Compromise to Get, You Compromise to Keep

I became Rick at 24 to fit in as a young officer. Ricardo felt like too many syllables.

I compromised to get in, and I learned the price of keeping it.

My advice to a young professional: please do not compromise.

Today I can say what I want. That is a different stage of life.

BONUS 5

FROM LESSON 8

You Cannot Aspire to What You Have Never Seen

Many people have never seen someone like them move across the country for a job.

If you have never seen it done, you do not dream of doing it.

When you finally get the chance, do not hide who you are.

You may be the first example someone else gets to see.

BONUS 6

FROM LESSON 10

Is It Ever Smart to Hide?
Not as an Ulterior Motive

The question: what if hiding a part of you gets better responses?

Do not hide as an ulterior motive.

Do not go out of your way to announce it, and do not go out of your way to disguise it.

If someone gave you an advantage because of a wrong assumption, that tells you something about them.

BONUS 7

FROM LESSONS 12 AND 17

Tailor the Message, Not the Person

- Dress for the room so your clothes do not distract. A suit in one church, a hoodie in another.
- Keep the main thing the main thing: the sale, the network, the mission.
- Speaking at a PhD level or an eighth grade level is effectiveness, not compromise.
- "I'm not compromising. I'm smart in tailoring my conversation to the target."
- The test: is the focus on making impact, or on how important I look?

BONUS 8

FROM LESSON 13

This Is Not Just an American Issue

Expectations about who you can be show up in many cultures.

Friends from India told me about being born into a caste and pushed back even when they felt bigger than that.

It may be amplified here in the United States, but it is not uniquely American.

BONUS 9

FROM LESSON 16

Well-Meaning Leaders Will Hand You Their Armor

- Leaders often want you to do what they did, with good intentions.
- A leader says, these are the four I did, so you should do the same four.
- David respectfully declined: "I've never proven that stuff."
- You can say thank you with respect and still choose what fits you.

BONUS 10

FROM LESSON 20

Know What Success Looks Like Before You Walk In

In the Army, my bosses always asked before a big meeting: what does success look like?

Yogi Berra said that if you do not know what you are aiming at, anything will take you there.

Authentic does not mean unprepared, arrogant, or ignorant.

You can be authentic and focused.

BONUS 11

FROM LESSON 21

AI Still Needs a Human Who Thinks in Systems

I came up as a network engineer and mastered systematic troubleshooting.

If you do not know how to think in systems, you do not know what to get out of AI.

I built a team of seven AI agents to act as data scientists, but I wrote the plan.

Getting an outcome from AI is still very much a human function.

BONUS 12

FROM LESSON 24

Mentors Who Wanted to See You Win

I grew up in the Army Signal Regiment.

Almost every leader who became a general in my field during my 25 years was someone I worked for.

I had people who genuinely wanted to see me do well, and I worked hard too.

My mentors were not Hispanic, which is why I say representation matters.

Some of them are still my mentors today.

BONUS 13

FROM LESSON 31

The Four Levels of Value: Implement and Unify

- Your pay is tied to the level of value you provide.
- Level 1, implementers: the doers, told what to do. Pay tops out.
- Level 2, unifiers: frontline managers of 5 to 20 people who make sure the implementers implement.
- Even the unifier level has a pay range, around the director level in technology firms.

Framework: Myron Golden, The Four Levels of Value.

BONUS 14

FROM LESSON 31

The Four Levels of Value: Communicate and Chart the Course

Level 3, communicators: vice president through executive vice president, speaking one to many.

Level 4, the C-suite: the people who come up with the ideas.

"Anybody can steer the ship, but only a leader can chart the course."

"As you master yourself, you can go up the value chain."

BONUS 15

FROM LESSON 32

Exceptional Leaders Are Genuinely Themselves

I have never met an exceptional leader who was not genuinely themselves.

Two stars and above in the Army: leaders you feel you could run through a wall for.

Authentic does not mean brash.

A soft-spoken example: Colin Powell.