

## BRAINFOOD

# BIG IDEA

### Thought leadership

Think of Don Draper, star of the *Mad Men* TV series about Madison Avenue in the 1960s, whose creative genius wins new accounts and turns around marketing disasters.

Thought leadership is the magical inventiveness that puts a new idea into the minds of others, which business-as-usual supposedly craves. It is an accolade for academics, a badge of honour for executives and a selling point for publishers.

The badge is pinned on after people have adopted the idea, not before, making it prey to the ex post facto dynamics of glorification, spin and adulation. It is an offshoot of celebrity culture, where people seek glamour rather than the quieter virtues of ideas worth having.

Aristotle was perhaps the ultimate thought leader, and many modern imitators crudely recycle his ideas and those of others who have been quickly forgotten.

Leadership is the key word here. It is a leader's job to try to see what others don't; to use smart methods for finding new insights, and disseminate them.

➔ To see Nigel Nicholson's book, *The 'I' of Leadership: Strategies for seeing, being and doing* (Jossey-Bass, £18.99), go to [iofleadership.com](http://iofleadership.com)

