

● impact

February 2021 | Issue 8

A Leadership Magazine

DIVERSITY

Working across differences

THE BLAME GAME

How to be bad at it

ALL FOR ONE

4 habits to be like musketeers

A STORY

On different perspectives

IMPACT HACK #2



hello

Welcome to the February issue of IMPACT.

This month we turn our attention to how we can work successfully with people who are different to ourselves, the 'game' to avoid at work and why the ethos of Alexandre Dumas' musketeers is at the heart of collaboration at work.

We also share our second monthly IMPACT HACKS (quick, practical tips for great impact), this time on the topic of leadership job interviews.

And there's a story about how we all look at the world in our own particular way.

Enjoy the read!

Please share your thoughts on the topics by connecting via www.2020visionleader.com.

Thanks for reading and thanks for all the great feedback we've been receiving from readers - it means a lot to us.

Mandy Flint & Elisabet Vinberg Hearn



impact

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EMBRACE THE DIFFERENCES

How to work effectively with people who are different to you

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

When people are different from each other, it can at first seem really hard to get off to great teamwork and collaboration.

But don't let being different put you off – because if you are willing to make it work, you can start to build a very powerful partnership; one that is healthy, creative and successful.

Differences come in many shapes and forms – we can have different personalities, values, cultures, opinions and more.

If we can see any kind of difference as a creative force, an opportunity for learning and better answers, then we can make the most of the different perspectives they bring.

Many people hate conflict and avoid it at all cost. But it doesn't have to be a bad thing.

Besides, conflict is a natural thing – we all have different opinions, which is what conflict is – it's simply a difference of perspective, of opinion. Conflicting opinions can be the source of healthy debates, great innovation and needed change, meaning we get even better results.

Personal differences, conflicting goals and competitive behaviours are indeed some of the reasons why conflict and tension occurs. And there's an inherent power in that conflict and tension, which can give a team, organisation or business relationship the boost that it needs to progress, change and become more effective. If everyone has the same opinion, everything remains the same, and in a fast-changing world, that's a disaster and will leave you behind those that embrace the differences. Continuous innovation is an absolute must for survival.

If you're serious about working well with business partners, clients, employees or any other stakeholders who are different to you – check out our top 7 tips:

ALWAYS RIGHT?

There's no need to "be right". Tell yourself that your solution might not be the right or only one. The first step to managing different opinions is to welcome it.

When two or more people have different opinions, see it as a good thing – we have different views here, what can we learn from all of those different views?

There's no need to think in terms of "right and wrong" – who's to be the judge of that anyway?

....continued

"I CAN TELL YOU, WITHOUT DIVERSITY, CREATIVITY REMAINS STAGNANT"

Edward Enninful

BE CURIOUS

Be curious about people who are different than you. Assume that you can learn from them and them from you. Ask questions. This is of course part of communication, to ask good questions – in order to deepen awareness and understanding. Just use questions though, not judgments. It may seem like a small difference, but it makes all the difference.

ENGAGE

Invite and engage people into dialogue, knowledge exchange and even healthy debate. Take an active interest in others by asking for their input and creative ideas. Assume that everyone has something to bring to the table and mean well.

This makes you look for the positive, the possibilities, the possible connections into what you are doing. If someone is competitive for example; see the positive intent behind that rather than going into a competitive mode yourself.

FIND COMMON PURPOSE

Find the common purpose. What do you both/all want to achieve? When you know the answer, communicate that to everyone involved and agree on a shared commitment to that purpose. If there is competitive behaviour between people, strive for connected goals that will make that behaviour counterproductive and superfluous. Linked goals bring out much needed collaborative behaviours.

WORK TOGETHER

Agree on how to work together. This becomes the base for your collaboration and teamwork. This effectively removes the risk of frequent – and very avoidable – conflict situations.

PLAY TO STRENGTHS

Find out what everyone is best at. Everyone has a unique collection of strengths – different to yours. Know them, make the most of them, and highlight how you can achieve more together when everyone contributes the best of themselves. This also reduces the risk of unhealthy competition as people feel unique and that need for competition disappears.

"WHERE ALL THINK ALIKE, NO ONE THINKS VERY MUCH"

Walter Lippmann



COMMUNICATE

Never stop communicating. Tensions and misunderstandings are often the result of incorrect and unnecessary assumptions, which in turn emanates from a lack of communication. Take responsibility for your communication with key stakeholders and encourage others to do the same. Create an open, trusting communication climate.

Achieving great collaboration with people that are different from you can be challenging, and will take longer to achieve than if you were more alike.

But it's worth it. Be patient, allow it to take time. It will pay off.

The greater level of innovation, learning and development as well as the dynamic interaction it brings is worth every challenging moment. Stay focused and keep reminding yourself that there is a win-win outcome to be had when working together in this open-minded and creative way.

In closing, pay particular attention to how you communicate. Think about what you say and how you say it when your opinion differs from somebody else's.

When faced by a different view, don't say "What do you mean by that?!" – try "That's really interesting, I hadn't thought about it like that. Tell me more" instead, and keep the creative dialogue flowing.

Differences at work and in business interactions can be a great thing, and should not be feared but addressed. Embrace those differences, welcome them for their innovative powers and make them work for you by using our top tips above.

It's a powerful way for you to make a real difference as a leader.

"OUR ABILITY TO REACH UNITY IN DIVERSITY WILL BE THE BEAUTY AND THE TEST OF OUR CIVILISATION"

Mahatma Gandhi





DON'T PLAY THE BLAME GAME!

8 ways to ensure you don't play this unproductive 'game'

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

The 'blame game' is one of the most unproductive work practices we know.

You know what we mean, right?

When people are trying to find a scapegoat, find out who is at fault. When peers point a finger at each other. When managers apportion blame to one of their employees. And so on and so on. We've all seen it and we've probably all experienced it.

There are so many things that are wrong with the 'blame game', which creates a **culture** of blame. What it leads to is particularly problematic. Here are just a few possible, common results:

- It makes people defensive
- It's void of personal responsibility and accountability
- It produces excuses
- It creates a sense of shame

- It creates fearful and deceitful behaviours
- It makes people tell lies or at least avoid telling the whole truth
- It makes people go behind each others' backs
- It creates cliques and sub-groups, 'us and them' thinking
- It makes people likely to return the blame
- It makes for non-existent teamwork....

No, the 'blame game' is not a fun game to play, that's for sure.

So how can we break the 'blame game' habits? Here are 8 ways :

- Take responsibility - say what you will do and by when
- Keep your promises
- Clarify expectations and set up clear goals and deadlines

- Hold yourself and others accountable
- Own up to mistakes (we all make them) and explain what you will do differently going forward
- Always treat others with respect
- Assume positive intent - people often mean well and do the best they can
- Focus on solutions (too much of a problem focus tempts us to look for "who's at fault")

Besides, if you're someone who doesn't play the 'blame game' you're probably someone who other people want to work with, someone others trusts, someone who creates great team spirit, engagement and drive, and someone who delivers results.

Good for you! Keep up the great work.

"TAKE ACCOUNTABILITY...BLAME IS THE WATER IN WHICH MANY DREAMS AND RELATIONSHIPS DROWN"

Steve Maraboli



ALL FOR ONE & ONE FOR ALL

4 habits to creating a "musketeer team"
which you can start role modelling today

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

There is no room for "going it alone" in teams - unless everyone works together, the team will lose out in every way, individually and collectively.

Successful teams have real team spirit.

The ethos of team spirit was wonderfully depicted by Alexandre Dumas' timeless story of *The Three Musketeers*. The musketeers' motto "*All for one and one for all*" is as relevant today as it was when the book was written back in the 1800's. They had taken an oath to always stand up for each other and it created their reality.

Another example of this kind of spirit can be found in the greatest sport teams, as winning teams put the team ahead of themselves. It's never just about the star of the team, it's always about the team.

Winning teams show that performance comes from team members coming together, giving it their all – for the team.

Everyone plays an important role – and they know that when they come together, they can achieve the kind of results that could never be achieved individually. This means that even if one of their best players would be missing, the team is still as strong.

This is not necessarily true for most teams, where some team members have a perceived or real "higher status" than their teammates. Others feel inferior as a result and potentially less important, and the star's absence at best worries and at worst cripples the team's performance.

With great team spirit everyone is willing to do everything for the team. They know that the team's mission is bigger than any personal agenda.

When you think about it, in the world of sports, you wouldn't even be allowed to play if you didn't have a "musketeer mindset"!

Work teams that don't have this mindset are not tapping into their potential to be a winning team.

A successful team is one where team members trust each other 100%, where they know and understand each other and themselves, and generously share their skills, knowledge and experience for the good of the whole team.

Successful teams are more about HOW they do things together than WHAT they do, and to achieve lasting success, an organisation needs to invest time in creating that kind of team culture and spirit up front. And that investment pays off very quickly.

**"THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A SELF-MADE MAN.
YOU WILL REACH YOUR GOALS ONLY WITH THE HELP OF OTHERS"**

George Shinn

Just having good individual contributors is not enough, because no one can know everything and when people come together and take joint ownership and offer their expertise, you create cross-pollination of ideas and ultimately better results.

Getting a team to embody the team spirit of "all for one and one for all" takes time, energy and effort, but it is well worth the effort.

Here are 4 ways to create 'musketeer teams', creating habits that make a difference:

No 1: Stay away from gossip

Negative, non-constructive gossip is always unhelpful. A great way to stop it is simply to stay away from it, and to ask those who gossip to go and talk to the right sources rather than going behind their backs.

If there are concerns that make you/others speculate; talk openly instead, ask questions and get clarity. If gossip isn't stopped, it becomes a culture, people think it's OK to do it, which can become addictive.

No 2: Highlight reasons and benefits

Make sure everyone sees WHY they should work as one team. To create shared ownership, get the team to brainstorm what the reasons and benefits are, or could be, of being a team. Once there are compelling benefits to being a team, it becomes natural and attractive to be part of one!

No 3: Make it your habit to use WE talk

Whether you talk about the team or with the team, always use words that shows how committed you are to the team, and recognise others when they do it.

No 4: Find the answers in the team

Everyone brings their knowledge, ideas and answers to a team – this is what you want to tap into as no one person has all the answers. Encourage team members to be open to the input of others, seeing that everyone has something unique to contribute to the team. What we think affects how we feel, and how we feel affects how we think. Great teams think of their colleagues with amiability, inclusion, respect and care.

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For more solutions on how to create a "one for all and all for one" team, check out chapter 9 in "Leading Teams 10 Challenges: 10 Solutions".

**"ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL,
UNITED WE STAND DIVIDED WE FALL"**

Alexandre Dumas





A STORY: THE GLASSES

A short story about perspective

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

There was once a beautiful country, where everything was yellow in colour – sky, grass, buildings and people too. If wasn't necessarily so that everything was yellow, but everything appeared yellow as people seemed to be born with yellow glasses/lenses. This was perfectly natural to them. They liked it, it was familiar and safe and good – and never questioned.

One day a young woman started wondering what other countries there were to discover out there in the big world. She had heard about a blue land somewhere and she was intrigued by the idea of something different. She decided to go visit this strange, blue land.

When she arrived she was given a pair of blue glasses, like everyone else. And with these on she explored and experienced this new, exciting country.

When she finally travelled back home again, her friends were keen to know how it had been and they all asked her: "How was it?"

"It was great" she said "and everything was wonderfully GREEN"

Anonymous

"IT'S NOT WHAT YOU LOOK AT THAT MATTERS, IT'S WHAT YOU SEE"

Henry David Thoreau



EACH PERSON DOES SEE THE WORLD IN A DIFFERENT WAY. THERE IS NOT A SINGLE, UNIFYING, OBJECTIVE TRUTH. WE'RE ALL LIMITED BY OUR PERSPECTIVE.

Siri Hustvedt

ANALYSIS

Even when we want to be completely objective, or try to put ourselves in somebody else's shoes, we take with us our own perspective, our 'programming' from all we know and who we are, our experiences and values. It's like we all look at the world through our own bespoke glasses.

By recognising that this is the case, we can switch off the 'autopilot' and proactively pause and question our automatic response or interpretation of something. We can attempt to 'remove our glasses' and look at a situation with as much clarity and objectivity as we can.

Having a few questions on the ready can be an effective way of doing this. Here are just examples of how that could sound:

- What am I overlooking?
- What assumptions am I making here?
- What else might that mean?
- What can I learn from this?

It starts with the realisation that our reality is unlike anyone else's and that's perfectly normal. But we benefit from using the 'moment of truth' between when something happens and our response to give ourselves more options. We can, at least partly, 'remove our glasses' and discover new things.

This story and abbreviated analysis is an excerpt from "Leading Teams 10 Challenges: 10 Solutions", Financial Times Publishing 2015



IMPACT HACK #2 INTERVIEWS

**6 proven hacks for
dialling up your impact in
leadership job interviews**

**BY MANDY FLINT &
ELISABET VINBERG HEARN**

Do you have a job interview coming up? And want to make sure you have great impact and increase your chances of securing that role? Maybe it's been a while since your last interview and you've gotten a bit 'rusty'? Then check out these 6 quick impact hacks:

AS ALWAYS, DO YOUR RESEARCH

Read up on the organisation; what's their purpose, what is the culture like, what market/industry challenges are they facing, what change journey are they on etc? Research the person(s) you will interview with too.

BE PREPARED

Think through the **specific** cases of your recent career successes. What did you do, how did you lead and what tangible results did that lead create? Think about how your experience can bring value to the organisation you're interviewing with, based on the research you've done.

PREPARE QUESTIONS

What do you want to ask that can create relevant conversations and that clearly shows you understand them and can bring value? Focus on the future and how you can contribute to it.

BE VIDEO READY

Appearance matters. Apart from your non-verbal communication, think about your room background and what that communicates too. And remember that you need to put more work into a video conversation than a face-to-face one. Engage. Smile. Listen.

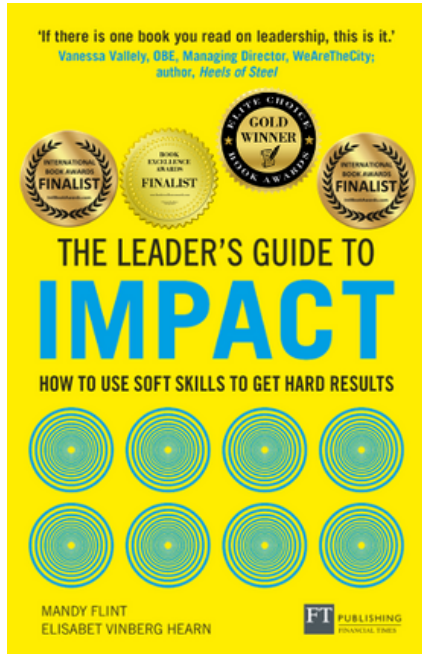
THINK ABOUT YOUR WHOLE MESSAGE

Consider your non-verbal communication. What is your body language like? Facial expression? Breathe. Smile. Facial reactions and body language can make all the difference for that first impression.

BRING YOUR BEST YOU

Relax. Remind yourself of your strengths; your skills as well as your personality. No one's best at everything, everyone is best at something. Let them connect with the person, not just the professional. Be you. You've got this.

CHECK OUT OUR AWARD-WINNING BOOKS ON LEADERSHIP



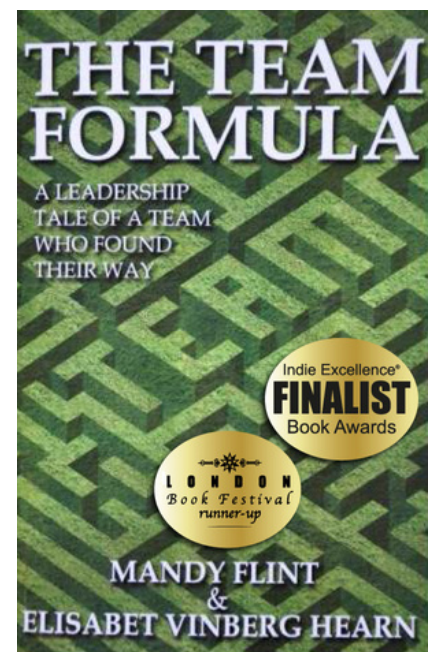
"A COMPELLING READ FOR THESE DISRUPTIVE TIMES"

Amazon reader review



"THIS BOOK IS A 21ST CENTURY GUIDE ON HOW TO BUILD A WORLD-CLASS TEAM"

Amazon reader review



"IT IS THE BEST BUSINESS BOOK I HAVE READ THIS YEAR, HANDS DOWN"

Amazon reader review

"BOOKS ARE THE QUIETEST AND MOST CONSTANT OF FRIENDS; THEY ARE THE MOST ACCESSIBLE AND WISEST OF COUNSELORS, AND THE MOST PATIENT OF TEACHERS."

Charles W Eliot



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