

# ● impact

November 2021 | Issue 15

A Leadership Magazine

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How to keep them

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# hello

Welcome to the last issue of IMPACT for 2021!

In this issue, we focus on how to retain your top talent, how to navigate the 'emotional minefields' of mergers & acquisitions, and what we can learn from a philharmonic orchestra and its conductor.

As we are coming to the end of the year, we also reflect on how to take stock of 2021.

And there's a story about the dangers of a suspicious mind - and the IMPACT HACK this time is all focused on face to face meetings (something that many of us may have gotten a bit rusty with!).

Enjoy the read and thanks for reading.

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays & Happy New Year!



**Mandy Flint & Elisabet Vinberg Hearn**



# impact

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# HOW TO RETAIN YOUR TOP TALENT

The war for talent is rampant - here's how to win it

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

The 'war for talent' is not a new challenge for organisations all around the world, but the pandemic has made it worse. A recent study from McKinsey shows that around 40% of employees are 'somewhat likely' to change jobs in the next 3-6 months. And 2/3 of them would do so even if they didn't have a new job offer. And a study by DDI shows that attracting and retaining top talent is one of the main challenges CEOs face.

***52% of CEOs say  
attracting & retaining top  
talent is a top challenge***

Living in a pandemic has been life changing in many ways. People may have been severely ill, they may have lost loved ones, been separated from family and friends and much more.

Many have of course worked from home, some finding that difficult and some finding it wonderful - and everything in between. Many people report having experienced a greater quality of life, with less commuting and more time with their family.

For all these reasons, these big life changes have made us stop and think, to ask ourselves questions like: *What matters to me? How do I really want to live my life? How do I want to spend my time? How do I want to work?*

Yes, there is a realisation for many that they are the leaders of their own life and that they have more options to choose from when it comes to the setup of work.

More and more companies offer people greater flexibility than before - some are even offering that people can "work anytime from anywhere".

Does this mean that you cannot retain your employees anymore? That it just comes down to total flexibility? No, it doesn't. Flexibility is increasingly important but it's not the only factor.

People want to feel that they belong and contribute to something that matters - people want to make a difference - it's in our human nature.

So how you consider what is important to people, matters greatly. Think about the impact you want to have in shaping a company where people want to work.

....continued

**"IT'S NOT HOW MUCH MONEY WE MAKE THAT ULTIMATELY MAKES US HAPPY BETWEEN 9 AND 5. IT'S WHETHER OR NOT OUR WORK FULFILLS US."**

*Malcolm Gladwell*



Here are 4 impactful leadership habits that can help shape a meaningful, inclusive organisation where people want to work.

### Habit 1: Focus on people and culture

See yourself as a culture shaper — how are you showing up? How will you be in meetings? What will you enable through your behaviours?

Engage with and lead your stakeholders. Involve them, inform, be curious; ask, listen, understand. Show empathy.

Talk about culture and healthy habits — make it more than just words. Recognise and praise healthy cultural habits when you see them — help people see the impact of those habits, make them clear and meaningful.

Think about, and design, the office as a culture space, where people come together to communicate and collaborate with each other, hence shaping and enhancing the culture.

### Habit 2: Lead with purpose

Clarify the purpose, why are you all here, how will you make a difference in the world, to your customers? Make sure it resonates with people.

Focus on making work meaningful, help people see how they contribute to the purpose and make a difference. Just like in the famous story about the NASA janitor who was asked by a reporter what his job was - and he explained that his job was to help put people in space. He could truly see how he made a difference to the overall purpose, making others' lives/jobs easier by taking good care of the facilities.

Continuously communicate the journey you are all on together as a team/organisation. Lead change in the context of purpose, help people see why change happens and how it contributes to the purpose and their ability to make a difference.

### Habit 3: Grow Collective Intelligence

Build the organisation's collective intelligence. Be intentional about bringing people together for creative dialogue and innovation. Driving product innovation is another of the top CEO challenges reported by DDI in their Global Leadership Forecast.

*50% of CEOs say driving new product innovation is a top challenge*

....continued

**“TRAIN PEOPLE WELL ENOUGH SO THEY CAN LEAVE, TREAT THEM WELL ENOUGH SO THEY DON'T WANT TO.”**

*Richard Branson*





Help people learn from each other and create together, seeing that they do truly matters.

Use AI to free up human intelligence for more creative purposes, making work more meaningful.

Be a role model for inclusion and non-bias. Unconscious bias is very human - it's the mental shortcuts our brain takes. Keep challenging yourself to truly include everyone, regardless of where they work from or any other aspects of diversity.

And keep asking yourselves: How can we work smarter, not harder? Have a continuous dialogue around that!

#### **Habit 4: Make the hybrid work**

As we've talked about in previous articles - figure out how to work in the new hybrid set up and involve all those impacted.

Create a Team Charter, an agreement on how to work together. This needs to include discussions and agreements on when people need to be together, for what purpose and how often - and when they can be online. Clearly figuring out these important 'in-person or not' aspects or work is very impactful.

Make it easy to communicate and collaborate - agree tools and forums for communication and collaboration (what gets communicated how and where).

Promote a healthy home/work integration, where people log off a certain time even if working from home. One way of role modelling that can be to not send emails out of work hours for example.

Give people as much flexibility as is possible, while considering the impact on all stakeholders.

A client we recently worked with had been working from home for quite a while and hadn't quite realised the important role that also he had when it comes to shaping the culture, building collaborative relationships, creating a sense of belonging and driving innovation. As a result of talking about it as a company, he decided to show up in the office at regular intervals. Not because he had to, but because he wanted to - he saw that it was meaningful and valuable for all of them.

#### **AND REPEAT.**

This is an ongoing, ever-evolving process - keep trying out solutions, evaluating and adjusting.

Keep having the dialogue, keep asking the questions that matter - like

- How is our purpose evolving?
- What do people need?
- How can we work smarter, not harder?
- And how can we make this the best place to work?

# "INCLUSION AND FAIRNESS IN THE WORKPLACE . . . IS NOT SIMPLY THE RIGHT THING TO DO; IT'S THE SMART THING TO DO."

*Alexis Herman*







# YOU CAN'T PLAY A SYMPHONY ON YOUR OWN

Lessons from a conductor

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

Have you ever observed the conductor of a philharmonic orchestra and how they spend very little time facing the audience?

In fact, when you think about it you'll recognise that they spend most of their time facing the orchestra, which is their team. They are spending their time guiding them to play beautifully, creatively and with great impact together.

And have you noticed how perfectly the musicians play together, seemingly unaware of each other, yet obviously acutely aware as they harmonise with each other through their various instruments and expressions, providing their own unique and crucial contribution.

And then once in awhile, the conductor faces the audience and shares what's going on – what they are doing, what we can expect, what they will or have delivered. And we, the audience, feel seen and taken care of. All of this is an example of great teamwork and great leadership.

You can't play a symphony on your own.

Take inspiration from the world of music. If you're a leader, ask yourself this question: Am I focusing too much outside the team rather than giving the team the focus and guidance they really need to be able to deliver? Are you for example attending meetings all day, hence not having much time to spare for your team?

Am I spending enough time enabling my team to perform at their best? Am I removing barriers to success?

All leadership is of course a balance; you need to carefully balance all your stakeholders.

Do you get the balance right? Are there maybe stakeholders that you give more focus than they need or want? Are there stakeholders that need more focus?

Take inspiration from the world of music and reflect on how you spend your time as a leader. Orchestras are also a great reminder of how important all team members are. You can't play a symphony on your own!

## "YOU CAN'T PLAY A SYMPHONY ALONE, IT TAKES AN ORCHESTRA TO PLAY IT."

*Navjot Singh Sidhu*



# THE 'MINEFIELDS' OF MERGERS

How to lead through the emotional minefields of mergers, acquisitions and demergers

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

Everyone who has experienced or seen a merger or acquisition up close knows that it is never, never straightforward or easy. And it's worse than that, in fact around 90% of mergers & acquisitions (M&A) fail, they never give the return on investment shareholders had hoped for (according to Harvard Business Review and others).

The main reasons they fail are these: **CULTURE, PEOPLE, BEHAVIOURS**. There it is. An M&A may look good on paper, may make sense for practical, productivity, market share and administrative reasons, but that does not necessarily take the human factor into account.

How do you think it feels to be acquired? Well it depends on how you are perceived, treated and greeted by the acquirer's people.

How do you think it feels to merge? Well it depends on how you are perceived, treated and greeted by the people of the company you merge with.

How do you think people feel in a demerger? Well it depends on how they are perceived, treated and greeted by the people who stay with them.

There is always a "winner takes all expectation" but the successful mergers happen when there is a true win-win mindset. So be careful not to allow that winner/loser mentality take hold. Best practices are often talked about but not acted on, this is where the **REAL** value can be gained. But if you pursue the winner/loser approach best practices don't get shared, hence synergies don't happen.

People make M&A's work or fail. How we think, feel and behave makes all the difference to the results.

So what can you do if you want to guide and support people and organisations through such changes?

## Here are some solutions

### **ANTICIPATE AND RESPECT EMOTIONAL RESPONSES - PLAN CAREFULLY**

Create a plan that includes what to do in terms of bringing people together and **THEN** how to bring the business operations together. Involve people from both sides. Consider who the influencers and informal leaders are – make sure they have a role in this. Focus on both the "what" and the "how". There is always an emotional reaction so don't ignore it, plan for it. It won't just go away. Put yourself in the shoes of others – what would that feel like if it was you? That tends to provide new perspectives and a new mindset.

...continued

**"THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN COMMUNICATION IS TO HEAR WHAT ISN'T BEING SAID."**

*Peter Drucker*



### **TAKE A CHANGE LEADERSHIP APPROACH - ACT, FOLLOW-UP, EVALUATE AND REWARD**

Take into account the aspects of going through the change curve and link that to the plan. Act on the plan, follow up regularly and evaluate if the results are there. If not, adjustments may be needed. And when the results are there, when you can see that collaboration is happening, that people are pulling together and starting to deliver results – recognise and reward that result, to encourage more of it.

### **CONSIDER CULTURE**

Both/all of the companies will have different cultures (= 'how we do things around here'). Bring this out into the open. Explore the cultures; what behaviours and habits exist that are useful and we can build on?

Take the best of both/all cultures and merge the cultures as well as the organisation.

Decide on what the culture needs to be going forward and involve people from both/all sides to make it happen. Reward the behaviours agreed on and showcase how they make a difference.

### **DON'T THINK THAT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES WILL BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER**

Policies and procedures are important but they can only work with the desired principles of the work, never how people respond to it. You need to emotionally engage people to bring them together. You need to build trust, get people to know each other to begin to trust each other – help people see that they have a shared purpose.

### **DON'T ASSUME YOU KNOW IT BEST**

The acquirer may (often unintentionally) come across as having "the upper hand" – after all, they acquired, right? Yes, but they must have acquired because they saw a value in what they were acquiring. So acquirers will do well to look at the other company with genuine appreciation.

### **BE CURIOUS**

This goes for everyone involved; look at the other company with curiosity and open-mindedness. Think "What do they bring? What do we bring? How can we make the most of BOTH/ALL companies? How will coming together make us stronger?" If it's not immediately obvious, then keep looking – the answer is always there.

...continued

**"MERGERS ARE LIKE MARRIAGES. THEY ARE THE BRINGING TOGETHER OF TWO INDIVIDUALS. IF YOU WOULDN'T MARRY SOMEONE FOR THE 'OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES' THEY OFFER IN THE RUNNING OF A HOUSEHOLD, THEN WHY WOULD YOU COMBINE TWO COMPANIES WITH UNIQUE CULTURES AND IDENTITIES FOR THAT REASON?"**

*Simon Sinek*





Ask and be prepared to listen without thinking you have the best answer. Mergers should mean taking the best of both.

### **COMMUNICATE LIKE YOU'VE NEVER COMMUNICATED BEFORE**

Communicate, communicate, communicate. Communicate all the time. Become an expert at stakeholder engagement. Listen to people, talk to people, ask questions. Involve people in conversation. Make everyone feel involved in (rather than mauled by) the M&A. Resistance to change is one of the key reasons why M&A's fail.

When people feel no one understands their frustrations, sense of perceived inferiority etc – they will dig their heels in, not embracing the change.

A real change management communication strategy, approach and plan is critical. It is simple and yet often left out!

People worry about the "What's in it for me?" – it is a natural human behaviour yet it can be missed during a merger.

Focus on the behaviours needed through the time of change

- be open minded
- be curious
- listen
- assume positive intent.

During a recent acquisition, someone we worked with described how they experienced feelings of betrayal:

*"I felt betrayed. I had been instrumental in building the business yet someone came along thinking they knew better and dismissed what I had created. I didn't even get a thank you or any acknowledgement. I certainly didn't feel engaged or keen to help with the change. All I wanted was an open conversation and some level of appreciation for what I had done and how we could all make it better. It wasn't much to ask, but I didn't get it".*

**We started off saying that the main reasons M&A's fail are culture, people and behaviours – well, the good news is that they are also the reason why they can succeed.**

## **"YOU HAVE TWO EARS AND ONE MOUTH AND YOU SHOULD USE THEM IN THOSE PROPORTIONS."**

*Chinese proverb*







# TAKING STOCK OF 2021

Another year of wisdom

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

We are coming to the end of another year and this is the perfect time to take stock. To think about achievements, successes, challenges, insights and how you've grown and developed. Do you realise quite how much you have learnt, this year alone? If not, this is the perfect time and opportunity to do just that.

In fact, this is not just for the end of the year, we need to spend more time in reflection mode throughout the year as well. With busy lifestyles we tend to rush onto the next thing without really appreciating what and how we have achieved. Yet, that is just what we all need to do, while also focusing on our strengths and then celebrate those strengths too.

Maybe you have been practicing leadership journaling, which we wrote about in the last issue of **IMPACT**. If so, you can look back at those reflections and pay specific attention to insights and realisations.

Imagine snapshots of the year? Where were you? What did you do? Which would be the pictures that best described 2021?

If you haven't yet captured your thoughts through the year or if you want to summarise the year, here are some reflection questions to help you get started:

- What are you most proud of from 2021?
- What did you achieve?
- How did you use your leadership, your ability to positively influence others?
- How did you help others? And what did that do for them?
- How did you use your strengths? When and where? And what difference did that make?
- What didn't go to plan and what was good with that? (Yes, that's a very important question because the toughest moments can lead to the greatest learnings and growth)
- What new knowledge did you acquire?

....continued

**“LIFE IS TEN PERCENT WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU AND NINETY PERCENT HOW YOU RESPOND TO IT.”**

*Lou Holtz*



- What did you learn?
- What surprised you?
- How will you celebrate your insights and achievements?
- How will you take your learnings from 2021 into 2022 and let them become levers for new meaningful contribution and success?

And finally - a little bonus question; **Have you thought lately about how wise you are?** Wisdom is being able to apply your knowledge and experience, bringing a unique contribution that no-one else has. What is yours? And how did you use it? Capture that too.

If you think about it, every day is a fresh, clean start – if we choose to look at it that way. It's never too late or too early to act on our dreams, our aspirations, our interests, our passions. And knowing where you are right now, is a great place to start.

Learn from yesterday, from this year, take from it what you can; learning, insights, results – and move forward with curiosity and joy. Anything can happen – and often does. What do you want to happen? And how will you make it happen?

Yes, a fresh new year is around the corner, with new opportunities, new energy, new collaboration for sustainable success. It's a great opportunity to take all your wisdom from this year into the next, using it as a stepping stone to impact in 2022.

Take a moment (or two!) to feel good. This is a perfect time of year to celebrate, so go ahead and enjoy the festive season coming up.

**You deserve it!**

# KNOWLEDGE + EXPERIENCE + KNOWING WHAT TO DO WITH IT = WISDOM

*Mandy Flint & Elisabet Vinberg Hearn*





# A STORY: A SUSPICIOUS MIND

**Assume the worst or forge a new path forward?**

**BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN**

*Walking back from a client meeting, Stephen smiled at the rows of unused city bikes for hire, which were part of a transportation scheme for London. He had never understood how anyone would like to take their life in their own hands that way, and the number of shining, stationary bikes seemed to suggest the same. Even though there were a number of black London cabs in the street, the traffic meant that anyone in a rush, was better off hitting the pavement, like him. The traffic stood still, with engines ticking over, and the odd annoyed honking of a horn. The exhaust fumes that hit his throat as he shot across the road between two cars, made him cough. Extracting himself from the street, he found refuge in the well-ventilated office foyer.*

*He chose the lift over the central escalators that crisscrossed the atrium. Reaching his floor, he held up his access pass and the clicking sound admitted him into the wide, almost hospital white corridor. Deep in thought about the demanding client meeting he had just come from, he was almost upon them before he spotted Philippa and Jonathan in deep conversation.*

*Their heads were close together and Philippa's ponytail flicked sideways as he overheard her say: "But that's not what Stephen is supposed to be doing!" This made Stephen stop dead in his tracks. As Jonathan and Philippa were both turned away from Stephen, they hadn't seen him. In the split second when Stephen wondered what to do, they had started walking ahead of him and the problem was solved. At the T-junction at the end of the corridor, his peer and his direct report went in different directions.*

*Which way should I go? I don't want to talk to Philippa, but I do want to speak to Jonathan. We had a good meeting this morning and now I find him talking about me to HER. What's going on between them? Yes, what is going on? What am I not supposed to be doing, what's she talking about?*

*Stephen's mind was overloaded with unanswered questions, and as much as he wanted to talk to Jonathan, there was no time as his next meeting was about to start. He resigned himself to the fact that it would just have to wait until later.*





## ANALYSIS

Stephen is clearly thrown by seeing one of his team members and one of his peers seemingly talking about him, and it not sounding positive. The fact that Jonathan had worked for Philippa before and they seemed close made Stephen feel uncomfortable and slightly out of control.

However, he has two choices here - he can either assume all the worst reasons why they mentioned he shouldn't be doing something (whatever that was) and let his mind go into suspicious overdrive. This is of course a very human reaction, to be defensive, but it's not a very helpful one. A more constructive option is to take a step back and assume positive intent and be pleased that communication flowed easily between the two, effectively connecting across different business areas. Stephen can also practice some open and respectful communication by telling Philippa that he had heard their conversation and that he'd like to hear more about it so that he can ensure they are properly aligned and expectations are met. In doing so, he shows that he chooses to be a role model for open, transparent and bridge-building collaboration, rather than colluding with any perceived behind-the-back conversations.

**"TRANSPARENCY MEANS THAT MY MOTIVES ARE EASILY PERCEIVED.  
NO HIDDEN AGENDAS AND I PROVE IT THROUGH MY ACTIONS."**

*Pamela Saunders*



# IMPACT HACK #9 FACE TO FACE MEETINGS

5 proven hacks  
for dialling up  
your impact as you start  
having face to face  
meetings again

BY MANDY FLINT &  
ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

We have all become used to online meetings, but many are now also starting to meet in person again and as we may be a bit rusty at this, it's good to create the best conditions.

Here are 5 proven impact hacks to consider as the world continues to open up and your face to face meetings increase in frequency.

## PREPARE

Do any pre-work/pre-reading as needed  
- and be prepared to contribute.

Are there any agreed "house/meeting  
rules" you need to be aware of? E.g.  
phones off, no laptop, dress code.

Be on time.

## HOW TO BE

Don't just focus on what you need to get  
done in the meeting, think about how you  
want to be, behave - what impact you  
want to have on others? Think about  
what you display, your mood, your  
mannerisms, your attention.

## PAY ATTENTION TO NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Be aware of what is going on for others  
by noticing their physiology. Use that  
added layer of information intentionally.

## SENSE THE MOOD

Use the added advantage of the feelings  
and dynamics in the room that you cannot  
get from being online. Ensure your radar  
is switched on and you are taking  
advantage of the dynamics between  
people – use that to help you be  
intentional with your comments.

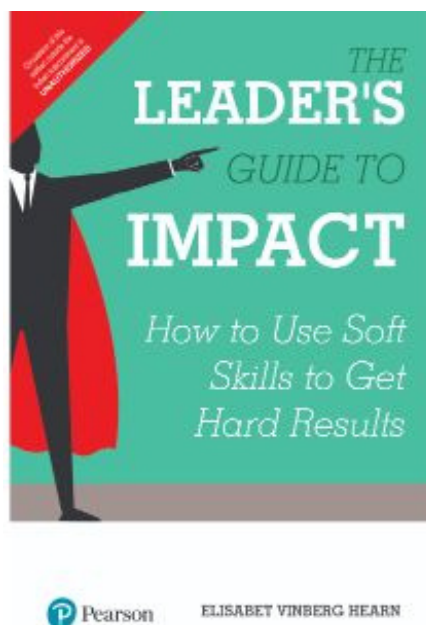
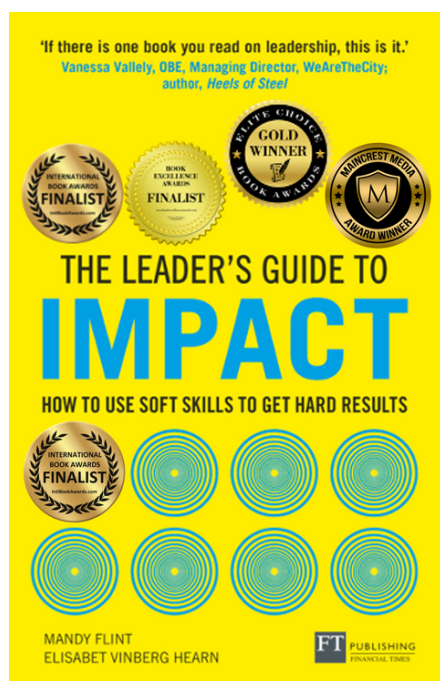
## BE INCLUSIVE

Make the most of being in a room with  
your stakeholders. Acknowledge them all.  
Maintain eye contact. As relevant,  
include them, ask them for their input.  
And remember those who are online, be  
the bridge and keep including those not  
in the actual space.

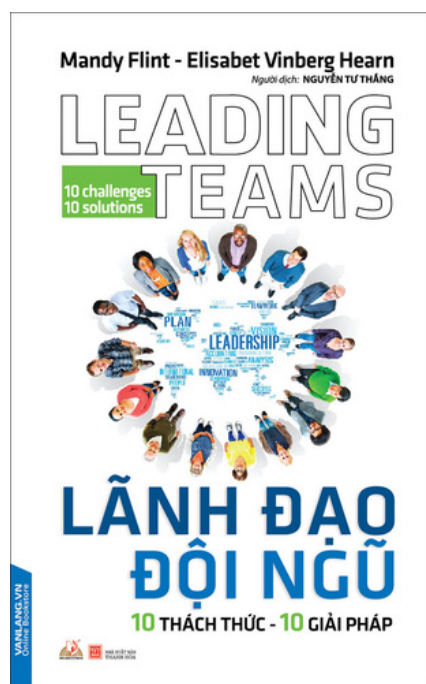


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3 BOOKS, 3 LANGUAGES (ENGLISH, SPANISH, VIETNAMESE) - AND MORE TO COME



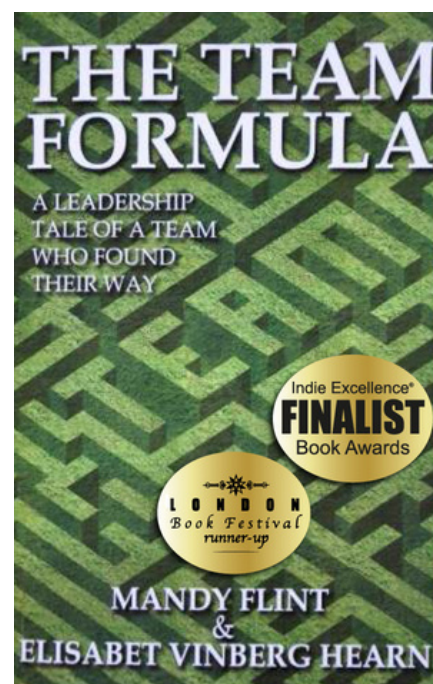
India



Vietnam



Mexico



"I KEPT ALWAYS TWO BOOKS IN MY POCKET, ONE TO READ, ONE TO WRITE IN."

Robert Louis Stevenson





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