

● impact

March/April 2022 | Issue 17

A Leadership Magazine

HOW, WHAT WHEN?

7 tips for mastering the art of questions

FEAR OR HOPE?

Leadership with *real* impact in a crisis

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A reluctant team member

IMPACT HACK #11

Strengths



hello

Welcome to the March/April issue of IMPACT!

This time we focus on the art of asking questions, leading with fear or hope, how to make change sticky and the power of contagious, culture-shaping leadership behaviours.

And there's a story about a reluctant team member and the effect they can have on a team.

The IMPACT HACK this time is all focused on strengths.

And if you're out and about in the UK, take the opportunity to pick up a copy of The Leader's Guide to Impact, available in most WHSmith stores (like below at London City Airport).



Enjoy the read and thanks for reading

Mandy Flint & Elisabeth Vinberg Hearn

impact

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THE ART OF ASKING QUESTIONS

7 tips for getting to better answers

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

Three key characteristics that great leaders have are that they:

- Are interested in other people
- Are good at listening
- Know that they don't know everything!

Great leaders ask really smart questions – they don't give the answers.

And as such, they realise that the art of asking questions is crucial when it comes to creating engaged team members and effectively managing the expectation of key stakeholders.

Think about it – when someone asks you a question – and are being genuinely interested and listening – how great does that feel! It makes you feel seen and important, it makes you want to get involved. It also makes you learn, and it gets you to think of the answer and therefore you learn from it.

In addition, when people have had input, they are more likely to make the change happen and create lasting change – as it was their idea.

No, a leader definitely doesn't need to have all the answers, they just need to have really smart questions. Or just questions. All questions can lead to interesting discoveries.

Be aware though that sometimes it may be tempting to just give the answer (assuming you have it), as it's easier and quicker. It may be more challenging to think of a smart question that allows the other person to think about the answer. It may take a little more time, but it's also more skilful and it achieves more impactful results. Remind yourself how a question can get the person thinking differently, creatively, insightfully.

Here's an example:

I recently worked with a leader who was talking to me about how much time they spend thinking about the future. Instead of giving them the answer on how to work out their time to allow for more of this (which is an answer), I asked them "As the leader of this team that you are responsible for, how much time do you think you should be spending thinking about the future and the longer term? And how could you make that happen?"

They stopped and reflected and came up with the answer for themselves, which means they are now going to put it into action. I gave them a question, not the answer.

So if you want to become an expert at asking questions, to connect with people, to learn and to create better answers, here are some of our top tips to consider.

**"THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO NOT STOP QUESTIONING.
CURIOSITY HAS ITS OWN REASON FOR EXISTING."**

Albert Einstein

....continued

TIP 1

What is the purpose of the questioning? Do you want to gather data? Do you want to create dialogue? Do you want to innovate? Or something else? This is important to be clear on so that you can target your questions to that purpose.

TIP 2

Open or closed questions? Open questions gather more information, but there are times when a quick yes or no is all you need or have time for – and then a closed question is the best option.

TIP 3

Use softening phrases. Too many questions can sound like an interrogation ☹️ so think about how you can best frame the question to make it interesting for the other person to answer it. Here are some examples of softening phrases:

- I'm curious...
- I'm really interested in your thoughts on....
- Tell me more about
- In what way....?

TIP 4

Ask the question (with softening phrases if relevant). Here are some examples of great open questions:

- What do you think we should do next? What would you recommend?
- If you could do anything, what would you do?
- Where could we find that information, do you think?

TIP 5

The most important thing – LISTEN.

Ask questions without judgment. Don't be too quick to jump to conclusions about what's being said. Don't think about how you will respond – just listen. It's amazing to see what happens when we fully listen to other people, and how much we learn.

TIP 6

Thank them. Whomever you've talked to, whatever the subject – thank them. Make sure they know that you really appreciate their input.

TIP 7

Think about how to make the most of the insight you've had from talking to others. Consider the different views you've been privy to. Don't forget to formally credit those that have given input, if relevant.

So think about it – who will you be meeting with today, tomorrow or next week? What questions can you prepare (in your head) to make that meeting interesting, productive, rewarding and maybe even transforming for both of you?

“MOST PEOPLE DO NOT LISTEN WITH THE INTENT TO UNDERSTAND; THEY LISTEN WITH THE INTENT TO REPLY. THEY'RE EITHER SPEAKING OR PREPARING TO SPEAK.”

Stephen Covey





NEVER LEAD WITH FEAR

The key to leadership is hope, care and trust
- especially in a crisis

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

As we watch in horror how Ukraine is being invaded, we reflect on different leadership styles and what it takes to lead in a crisis in particular.

In a crisis everything comes to a head and the key characteristics of effective leadership become crystal clear.

We have probably all met leaders who were feared by others. Those that through their actions and behaviours have made others avoid them, appease them or even cower to them. Yes, that's sadly not uncommon, but let's be very clear here, that is NOT leadership.

Leadership by fear and aggression is not leadership at all - it's bullying and weakness. And that does not belong in a leader's role or job description.

When people are fearful, they are not operating at their best, they are in survival mode rather than in a creative, collaborative, success generating mode. They may even hide the truth from the leader in an attempt to protect themselves.

We have seen this happen when a financial loss escalated as no-one dared tell the boss that things were not going to plan as they feared his reaction.

Yes, leaders who create fearfulness stop diversity of thought hence are surrounded by group think and yes-sayers who fear speaking up and become enablers of bullying and suppression. And this in turn makes the leader and their decisions less and less successful and effective.

Not only does it feel pretty awful to be at the other end of fear-inducing leadership, it's also a HUGE waste of human capacity and potential. No-one is at their best and everyone is poorer as a result.

No, there is really only one way to lead effectively and sustainably - especially in a crisis - through love and care for others, by wanting the best for others, by looking for win-win outcomes.

Those are the leaders we remember and value, and are thankful for them being or having been in our lives. They leave a legacy that lasts and lives on through others even when no longer working directly with that leader.

...continued

**"IF YOUR ACTIONS INSPIRE OTHERS TO DREAM MORE, LEARN MORE,
DO MORE AND BECOME MORE, YOU ARE A LEADER."**

John Quincy Adams

Here a five key habits of leaders that lead with love and care for others.

BEING INCLUSIVE AND LISTENING

They involve others in dialogue, continuously. They listen for and value the input of others. They are willing to change their mind as they learn more.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION

They make it easier for people to be successful by being non-hierarchical, removing conflicting/competing goals, inviting the right people to the table. They are not afraid of bringing diverse groups of people to dialogue.

They don't hesitate to push boundaries and find new solutions through diversity of thought and true collaboration.

LIKING PEOPLE

They are genuinely interested in people, they like people, they take the time to connect with them and understand them. They value them for their unique contribution.

FEELING INSPIRED

They are inspiring, and that is driven by them feeling inspired themselves. They seek inspiration as they know how impactful that is to all involved.

INSPIRING AND CREATING HOPE

They help people see that great things are possible here and now or around the corner.

Even in the darkest moments they are able to embody and convey a sense of purpose to all, while helping people see how they can contribute to that purpose and feel in charge of their own situation. They know that hope breeds hope which breeds great results.

Great leaders always inspire hope. They are not afraid to face realities, but also look for solutions and ways forward. They are realistic optimists.

“WHEN WE LOVE, WE ALWAYS STRIVE TO BECOME BETTER THAN WE ARE. WHEN WE STRIVE TO BECOME BETTER THAN WE ARE, EVERYTHING AROUND US BECOMES BETTER TOO.”

Paulo Coelho



REAL TRANSFORMATION OR BOOMERANG CHANGE?

How to make change sticky

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

Everyone talks about transformation, but is it really transformation they are pursuing? Or could it be that it's "just" change?

Don't get us wrong, change is sometimes enough, but the problem is that change often *isn't* enough, or the efforts put into change are not impactful enough and therefore don't really change anything other than what's on the surface. People fall back into old habits – as habits die hard – we all know that. A bit like how an ice cube can melt and change into water BUT it can also be put back into the freezer and return to being an ice cube.

Transformation, real transformation, is a marked, significant change, where the change is so thorough, so disruptive, so – well, yes, transforming – that it can't go back to what it once was. Just like how a butterfly can't transform back into a caterpillar. The change is complete and persistent.

Real transformation requires more than a well managed project (to change for example processes, digital tools or organisational structure), it requires a transformation of mindset, habits and culture.

And that transformation must be led from the top, where leaders themselves transform how they lead the organisation, how they behave, what they prioritise, what actions and behaviours they ignite in others.

Transformational change happens at a behavioural level. If the behaviours and habits within an organisation don't change, nothing really changes.

Without it, it's unlikely that transformation will happen and you end up with what we call Boomerang Change.

This is where people never fully get onboard with the change, stick to many of their old daily habits and the change efforts and investments never really pay off. It doesn't matter how many great collaboration tools you implement to make a hybrid workplace function, if people don't trust each other and want to work together, those tools will not give the desired effect or payback.

A RECENT STUDY BY
BOSTON CONSULTING
GROUP SHOWS THAT

75%

OF DIGITAL INITIATIVES FALL
SHORT OF THEIR OBJECTIVES
DUE TO THINGS LIKE
MINDSET, CULTURE AND
LACK OF CLEAR GOALS

....continued

“TRANSFORMATION LITERALLY MEANS GOING BEYOND YOUR FORM.”

Dwayne Dyer

So, if you are serious about your business or digital transformation, take a moment to reflect on how you can bring all the pieces of real transformation together – the WHY, the WHAT and the HOW, keeping in mind that real transformation is more about people, mindsets and habits than processes, projects and tools.

It's about connecting with people, with their hearts and minds. It requires vision that makes sense to people, and hope about what the transformation will bring and what role each person will play in that. It's about bringing people with you on the journey, not just giving them a fait accompli about a change.

It's about CHANGE LEADERSHIP not just change management.

Change leadership is about giving direction, setting the scene, giving the context, taking people on the journey with us. Management is different; it's more of the execution – how we are moving in the right direction. It's about keeping track, checking boxes, ensuring we are on the right route. We need both but in times of change, leadership comes first.

How could we start managing something that hasn't been given enough direction? We might end up anywhere! And not necessarily where we wanted to be.

Think about how you can ensure real, well-invested transformational change. How you can best achieve sticky change.

- *How will you behave?*
- *What will you create in others, how will you make them feel?*
- *How will you connect not just with people's minds but also their hearts?*
- *How will you engage, communicate and collaborate with others?*

And maybe Einstein said it best...

"The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking"

If we want real, sticky transformational change, we need to do things differently. We need to think differently about change and we need to think about the power of habits and behaviours. That's where the rubber hits the road.

Don't waste your time on Boomerang Change. Isn't it high time to leave those exhausting experiences behind and go for Real Transformation?

"THEY ALWAYS SAY TIME CHANGES THINGS, BUT YOU ACTUALLY HAVE TO CHANGE THEM YOURSELF."

Andy Warhol



WHEN BEING CONTAGIOUS IS GOOD

The 8 most contagious leadership behaviours - and how they shape the culture

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

There is always a culture wherever you work (just like any society is guided by its cultural norms) and the culture can either be left to its own devices or it can be consciously created, adjusted, tweaked or changed. You decide.

Culture simply determines 'how things get done around here'. It is usually implicit rather than explicit. It is not the 'what', it is the 'how' of business. It is how people react, behave and interact every minute of every day. It's not determined by a framed poster on the wall in reception, it is more complex than that. And this is the challenge with culture, the concept is simple but the implementation can be very complex as habits die hard, and to change behaviours takes time. The leaders have a huge part in shaping this.

Leaders at all levels have a responsibility when it comes to the organisation's culture, but the buck stops with the CEO and the senior leadership team.

Everyone's behaviours shape the culture, but the behaviours that are displayed by and accepted or even rewarded by leaders are the biggest culture shapers.

THE 'BAD' CULTURE SHAPER

Imagine a CEO who speaks about the value of transparency and openness, but who goes behind his executives backs, sharing certain things only with his 'trusted few'. The executives that experience this become cautious, thinking it's not about transparency at all – I'd better tread carefully around here from now on. These executives in turn become less transparent with their teams, who become disenchanted by the false behaviours (=not in line with the values) of their leaders.

This is how leaders shape culture.



THE 'GOOD' CULTURE SHAPER

Imagine a company that says it values and respects people's work/life balance. The leaders then reward and praise people who work smarter and within work hours, and work together in teams to achieve. They are rewarding what they value not what they don't value (they are not rewarding people who work long hours and sacrifice their personal lives).

This is how leaders shape culture.



Culture should be on every board's, executive team's and leader's agenda. Leaders at all levels set the tone for 'how things get done'. Culture starts at the top, but can't just be dictated from the top. It needs to resonate with people at all levels, as something they would 'stand for' themselves.

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"CULTURE SHOULD BE ON EVERY BOARD'S, EXECUTIVE TEAM'S AND LEADER'S AGENDA"

Mandy Flint & Elisabet Vinberg Hearn

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So leaders who want to maximise the power that is culture, should look to themselves first:

- *How am I behaving?*
- *What messages am I sending through my behaviours?*
- *What behaviours am I creating in others?*

And then start changing and adapting their behaviours, creating new habits if needed to create the desired culture.

The reason leaders are such **major culture shapers** is that leadership behaviours are contagious.

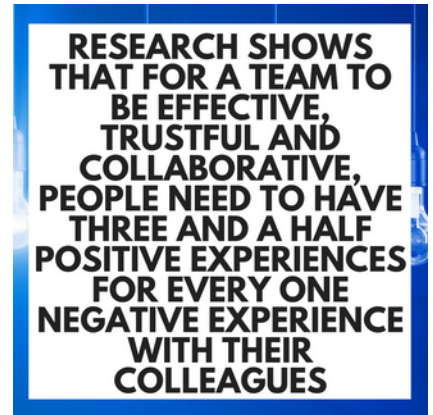
A study by Zenger & Folkman where 51 leadership behaviours were tested for their contagiousness, showed that these are the 8 most contagious behaviours, in order:

1. ***Developing self and others***
2. ***Technical skills***
3. ***Strategy skills***
4. ***Consideration and cooperation***
5. ***Integrity and honesty***
6. ***Global perspective***
7. ***Decisiveness***
8. ***Results focus***

Now, take a moment and reflect:

- *Where do you think you are at with these behaviours?*
- *What behaviours would you like to make contagious where you work?*
- *What behaviours could you develop and display more to shape the kind of culture you want to embed in your team or organisation?*

Culture is created through the experiences we spark in others. Some experiences are positive and some negative and it can be described as making deposits in people's "positive and negative bank accounts".



What this means is that we need to create enough of those positive encounters to make up for the inevitable negatives – and we can probably all do this more; by praising others, giving credit where credit is due, listening with interest, and recognising strengths.

“LEADERSHIP IS A SERIES OF BEHAVIORS RATHER THAN A ROLE FOR HEROES.”

Margaret Wheatley





A STORY: THE RELUCTANT TEAM MEMBER

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

"So, where is Samuel?"

Anna looked at the others. "We said we would meet at 2 and it's already 10 past. Where is he?"

Stephen tried not to look frustrated, but was finding it hard. The morning team building had been OK, but not much more. Frankly it had been a bit dry and not as dynamic as he had hoped, he felt quite relieved that it was finally over. Now he wanted to shake that off and was ready to have some fun. Even if the team hadn't bonded much so far, he was sure this would do it. "There's nothing quite like some friendly competition to get people to get to know each other better", he thought.

They were all, apart from Samuel, standing by the quad bikes. To their right was the manor house, a big white rendered building with big windows and a large terrace with uninterrupted views of the sea. The adjoining crop fields were lit by the sun; it was a beautiful Swedish summer day. To their left the quad bike trail disappeared around the corner on top of the sea cliffs, into the next bay.

Stephen's phone beeped.

He looked down to his phone, picked it up and hit the keypad to reveal a text message:

"Obviously I'm not coming to the quad bikes as I have a bad back. I'm going to be working in my room at the manor and I'll see you at dinner. Samuel"

Stephen was shocked, "What was this? How come Samuel had not said anything about this before, and they had been together all morning?" He became aware of the team looking at him. He looked up and made an effort not to show how annoyed he was. He felt he had to demonstrate leadership right now.

"Samuel's not coming. He has a bad back. He'll see us later at dinner. So let's get going and have some fun".

There was an awkward silence when no one said anything but the question hung in the air - why is Samuel not coming, really? There was a real sense that Stephen was fobbing them off and it put a damper on the afternoon.

**This story is a rewritten excerpt from
"The Team Formula" MX Publishing 2013**

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ANALYSIS

In the story, the team in question has come together to build the team for the first time since being formed after a merger.

Samuel is a reluctant team member, but not in a straight talking way. Instead of talking to Stephen (his boss) and sharing any doubts or misgivings he may have about the venture, he makes up a story as to why he can't participate, at the last moment, when he can't be challenged or held to account.

Not only does this perplex and annoy Stephen, it also starts the team wondering about Samuel's agenda. They are starting to add up small instances of Samuel's passive aggressive approach and it's creating a bit of weariness in their minds, a wedge is in danger of developing between them.

There are clearly a number of different ways this could have been resolved differently. And the key is of course honest, respectful communication and sharing of thoughts and hesitations - so that any fears or question marks can be addressed and resolved, for the benefit of the whole team and their performance. This is everyone's responsibility, to want to find constructive solutions rather than simply getting annoyed or jumping to conclusions, which tend to only exacerbate things.

“COOPERATION IS THE THOROUGH CONVICTION THAT NOBODY CAN GET THERE UNLESS EVERYBODY GETS THERE.”

Virginia Burden



IMPACT HACK #11 STRENGTHS

**4 proven hacks
for dialling up
your impact through
Strengths**

**BY MANDY FLINT &
ELISABET VINBERG HEARN**

No one is best at everything, but everyone is best at something. And when we activate our strengths through awareness, we lift them to a new level of impact.

Here are 4 proven impact hacks to consider when wanting to increase your impact by making the most of your unique combination of strengths.

IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTHS

People often focus more on their weaknesses than their strengths, despite the fact that strengths are your greatest success predictors.

Figure out what **your** strengths are through self reflection. Ask for feedback from those who know you. And/or use a strengths assessment tool.

BE AWARE OF YOUR STRENGTH BLINDSPOT

Don't take your strengths for granted (which is otherwise easily done as they feel so natural to you). Reflect on the value of them and how they have helped take you where you are. Recognise the impact of your strengths.

DEVELOP YOUR STRENGTHS

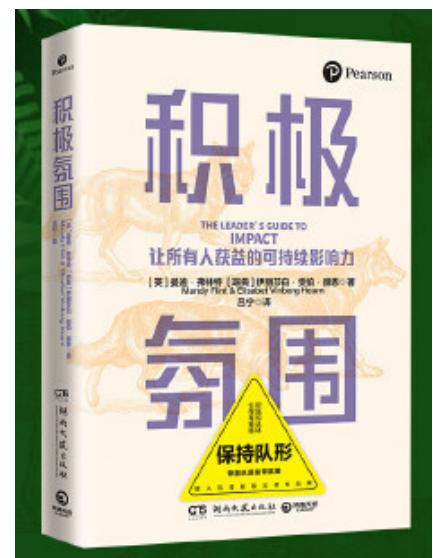
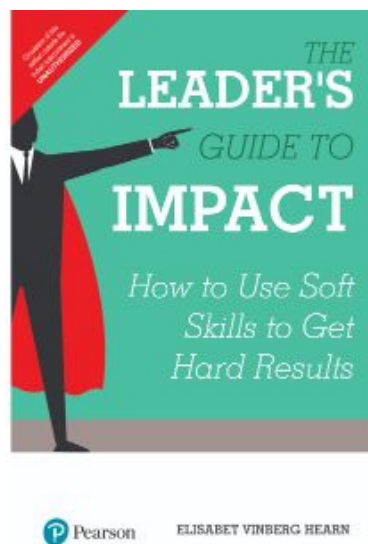
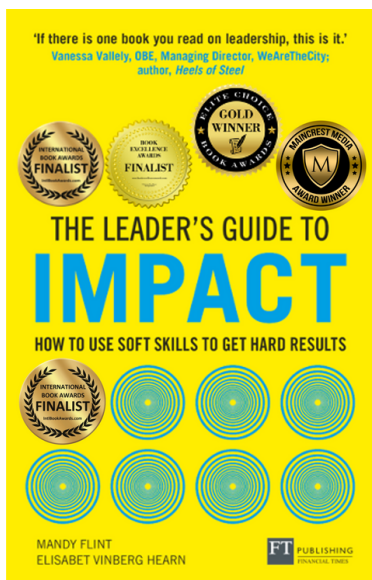
Strengths are often natural abilities but they can also be further developed by building more knowledge. If, for example, your strength is analytical thinking you could learn more about analytical techniques that can take the strength to a higher level of impact.

PUT YOUR STRENGTHS TO WORK

Apply your strengths with intention. Think through how you will use for example your ability to communicate to help you build stronger relationships with stakeholders.

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**3 books, 11 awards, 7 covers, 4 languages:
English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese**



*The Leader's Guide to Impact
India edition*

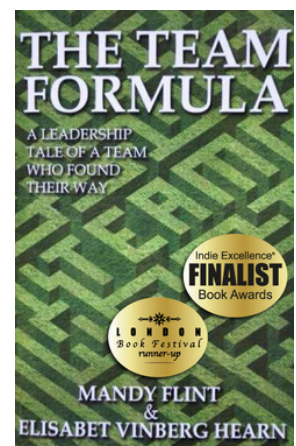
*The Leader's Guide to Impact
China edition*



*Leading Teams
Vietnam edition*



*Leading Teams
Mexico edition*



**"TO LEARN TO READ IS TO LIGHT A FIRE; EVERY SYLLABLE THAT IS SPELLED OUT
IS A SPARK."**

Victor Hugo

A vibrant, high-angle photograph of a canal in Amsterdam. The scene is dominated by a row of colorful, multi-story Dutch houses with distinctive gabled roofs and numerous windows. Lush green trees are planted along the canal banks, partially obscuring the buildings. In the foreground, a long, narrow houseboat with a wooden deck and various potted plants is moored on the water. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

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