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ripple effect

Culture is a construct that defies any clear definition—it is a combination of factors that go into its making. But who creates this fabric that holds the threads together? Invariably those at the helm, the role models who build cultures and shape new behaviors in others. So, the least they can afford is to leave their impact to chance.

You may have a lot of strategies—for the business, change initiatives, cost saving, or growth. So why not have a strategy for your impact?

Do you know what impact you are having at work? Do you truly know what kind of ripple effect you create around you? Do you know how you make others feel?

For the last 20+ years, we have worked with many hundreds of leaders around the world, and we have taken great interest in the importance of leadership impact. We have experienced leaders with great, positive impact and those with less effective and even very negative impact. What makes the difference? In our experience, it starts with awareness—self-awareness and social awareness. The more aware you are of yourself, your thoughts, feelings, values,

stressors and energizers, and the more aware you are of the world around you, the more you can start to take control of your impact and shape the impact you want and need to have to be successful.

It may not always be about the impact you want to have, it may be about the impact that others 'need' you to have.

is your awareness muscle in great shape?

Awareness is a bit like a muscle in your body, it needs to be used, trained, and flexed to build strength. Is your awareness muscle in great shape? Have you been training it lately? Or have you expected it to be in fine shape without any work? What more could you do to build its strength?

When was the last time someone knocked you with their rucksack while turning around in a cramped commuter train? Or seemed to ignore you in a meeting? Or were oblivious to the fact that they were holding up a whole airplane aisle of people while talking to their friend instead of getting into their seat? Or did not remember you even though you know you have met several times before?

In all those examples, their awareness muscle was probably not as well-trained and engaged as it could have been. And the impact on you was probably not great, right?

taking control of your ripple effect and the multiplication affect

Everyone can benefit from great impact, but it is particularly important for leaders.

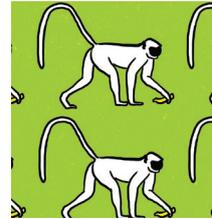
When you are a leader, you deliver results with and through others and this is why it is imperative that you take control of the impact you have—as there is a multiplying effect that leaders' actions and behaviors have. A leader is always 'on stage', a role model, people see what you do; so your ripple effect is a reality. Impact happens through knowledge and skill, and at times through a position of power, but maybe most importantly through behaviors. If you want to achieve positive impact, then pay particular attention to behaviors. How we behave and conduct ourselves have an impact on others, creating ripple effects that often go much further than we can ever imagine.

Research shows that leadership behaviors are contagious, so it is worth choosing your behaviors with care. What do you choose to make contagious in your organization?

Take a moment to reflect on the impact you want and choose to have, in order to be the most successful leader you can be—for the benefit of those you work with, your organization, its customers, and partners, and of course yourself.

leadership is the act and art of influencing others

Leadership and impact are an art, not an exact science. There is not just one way of being a great leader. The most impactful leaders we have encountered authentically



The most impactful leaders we have encountered authentically fine-tune their actions and behaviors to the situation they are in and the people they are with.

fine-tune their actions and behaviors to the situation they are in and the people they are with. No one gets it right all the time, but we can all maximize our impact with greater awareness and focus.

Whether consciously thinking about it or not, you have an impact. And chances are, if you do not think about it, then you may not achieve the impact that you want or need.

Leadership is the act—and art—of influencing others. And your ability to influence dictates what impact you have

Whatever impact you want to achieve, always do so from a win-win perspective—the impact should benefit everyone involved and not just in the short term, you need to be prepared for the long term too. And your impact should be in harmony with the organizational direction, vision, and strategy.

be intentional about your impact-do not leave it to chance

Some people leave their impact to chance, but that is a risky approach; impact is much too important to leave to chance.

As impact is that important, you need to challenge yourself to become aware of the impact you have or maybe lack. You may have a lot of strategies, for the business, for change initiatives and more, but you also need to have a strategy for your impact and therefore what that will do for the business.

Your impact is and should be bigger than you. And as a senior leader in particular, it is not about raising your

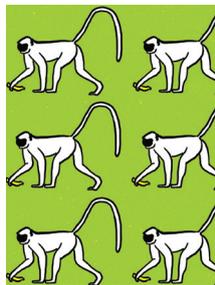
own profile, your focus on impact is for the good of the business, the greater good. Consistent and/or powerful impact creates your legacy, what the history books would say about you. Your legacy is also your personal brand. What do you want to be known for? What legacy do you choose? When you move on to the next role, what do you want to be remembered for?

Impact has always been important but usually a subconscious occurrence rather than a focused effort. The awareness of its importance has grown over time, hence also the need to, at a minimum, manage, or ideally even create the impact you 'want' to have rather than just accepting the impact you naturally have. And by being proactive about it, you get there quicker.

If you are a senior leader, then your impact is also magnified. You set the pace for your organization. You need to lead and role model the kind of impact behaviors the organization, its people, its customers, and all other stakeholders need.

Your impact is your legacy.

Some find the idea of creating impact challenging as it somehow seems false or conceited to them to 'create' impact, hence they may be reluctant to do something with this. This is particularly true for leaders in the early stages of their career. If you are a more senior leader, this concept should and needs to be at the forefront of your mind and something you should be comfortable with. Creating



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

impact is a positive, powerful, and respectful commitment to excellence.

reputation and brand matter when it comes to your leadership

'Reputation' and 'brand' matter in all leadership positions and it is important for leaders to understand and work with that. Whatever leadership role you are in, it is your duty to have a strategy for your impact. And to see your leadership brand and reputation as a vehicle for influence and impact, particularly in a fast-changing world, where each moment matters.

leaders impact culture full stop

Culture is very topical in organizations. There is always a culture. It can be left to chance or it can be consciously worked on and shaped.

Leaders at all levels have a responsibility when it comes to the organization's culture, the buck stops with the senior leaders. Everyone's behaviors shape the culture, but the behaviors that are displayed by and accepted or even rewarded by leaders are the biggest culture shapers. They impact culture the most.

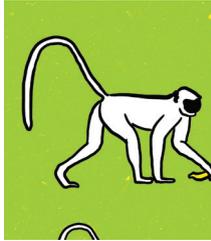
the 'bad' culture shaper

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 is 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 behaviors (=not in line with the values) of their leaders. That is how leaders shape culture.

Transformational change happens at a behavioral level

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



How we operate rather than simply what we do is becoming more and more critical to success. It is all about how we impact people, the business, and the world around us.

what they value, not what they do not value (they are ‘not’ rewarding people who work long hours and sacrifice their personal lives). That is how leaders shape culture.

So leaders who want to maximize the power that is culture, must look to themselves first: What is my impact? How am I behaving? What messages am I sending through my behaviors? What behaviors am I creating in others? And then start changing and adapting their behaviors, creating new habits if needed, to create the desired culture.

the 5-step impact strategy creator

Going into the future, our ability to have great impact is becoming more and more important. We all need to think about our effect on others and what effect we want to have. How we operate rather than simply what we do is becoming more and more critical to success. It is all about how we impact people, the business, and the world around us. In fact, it is fast becoming ‘the’ differentiating factor for successful executives, leaders, and organizations overall, something that we observe every day in our work.

And considering that leaders are increasingly connected 24/7 through social media, you are always ‘on stage’ so the need to manage your impact is crucial. By actively ‘creating the impact’ they want, leaders are demonstrating they are more in charge of, and can better predict the outcomes they get. We all need to manage our personal impact, and the effect our impact has on all our stakeholders, both in the short and the long term.

Are you ready to create your ‘impact strategy’? Great, then use our 5-Step Impact Strategy Creator to get you started.

step 1: decide on the impact you want to have

Reflect: What impact do you want to have and on who?

Act: List situations, initiatives, projects, places, teams, people.

step 2: clarify what it will lead to

Reflect: Why do you want to have that impact (what difference will it make)?

Act: Map out the links between your impact and team/divisional goals and organizational vision and mission

step3: set target date

Reflect: When do you want to achieve that impact?

Act: Decide on milestones and deadlines

step 4: create an action/behavior plan

Reflect: How will you achieve that impact?

Act: List ideas for actions to take and behaviors to adopt. Consider the support you may need from others

step 5: decide on success measures

Reflect: How will you measure/assess your impact going forward?

Act: List possible measurements, such as surveys, feedback, productivity ■