

# ● impact

June 2021 | Issue 12

A Leadership Magazine

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# hello

Welcome to the June issue of IMPACT.

This month we focus on the importance of seeing patterns, how feedforward is the way to go, and why we should laugh more at work.

We also share another of our monthly IMPACT HACKS (quick, practical tips for great impact), this time on change.

And there's a story about a team that lets their guard down and connects.

Enjoy the read!

Please share your thoughts on the topics by connecting via [www.2020visionleader.com](http://www.2020visionleader.com).

Thanks for reading

**Mandy Flint & Elisabet Vinberg Hearn**





# impact

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# LESSONS FROM A LEGEND

Be a master of patterns, like Wayne Gretzky

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

Wayne Gretzky, as many of you know, is a legendary former Canadian ice-hockey player – some would even say he's the best player ever. In fact, he is the highest point-scorer and has more assists than any other player in the history of the NHL (North America National Hockey League). And there is a lot we can learn from him, which is relevant to work and life overall.

In one of his many, many interviews, he was asked what made him such a good player, what it was that made him more successful than others.

His response was that so many players go to where the puck is, while he went where the puck was about to go. He had the ability to read the other players' patterns, to understand what would happen next, where the game was going.

He was good at observing and noticing those patterns and to use that information to direct himself to where the puck was going, and then he would head on over there - before everyone else.

## EVERYTHING IN LIFE IS A PATTERN

Nature has patterns. Weather and seasons have patterns. Human beings have habitual patterns, in their thoughts, their feelings and their actions. We're constantly surrounded by patterns.

The better we can become at noticing our own patterns (= self awareness) and those of others (= social awareness), the better results we can achieve. We can respond better to all situations, we can communicate better, create better relationships and lead better.

## OUR OWN PATTERNS

Let's look at self awareness first. If we can become aware of our own patterns, we can keep or even enhance them, or we can change them. If we are not getting the results we want and need, if our habits aren't working for us, we can change them, and get better results.

We all get stuck at times, doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Of course we need to do things differently to get different results.

Habitual and situational patterns aren't always easy to break, but if we can just become aware of them, then we are well on the way to change.

...continued

# "TO UNDERSTAND IS TO PERCEIVE PATTERNS"

*Isaiah Berlin*



And we can start creating new, more effective patterns, one step at a time. With intention.

## **OTHERS' PATTERNS**

Let's look at social awareness next. If we can become aware of other people's habits and situational patterns, we can start to predict some of what's coming up, so we can approach situations in the best possible way.

An increasingly important EQ skill for leaders is to be able to observe and listen, to be curious enough about others and the world around us to understand them better. We can all become great observers.

Let's take inspiration from the legendary Gretzky and become masters of patterns, not just seeing what's happening right now but also what might happen next.

Let's become good at seeing the bigger picture, how one thing leads to the next.

Want another Gretzky nugget of wisdom? Check out the quote below. It speaks for itself, but it's likely a reminder that we can all benefit from at times.

**What 'shots' have you avoided?  
What 'shots' will you take next? And  
what difference will that make?**



# **"YOU MISS 100% OF THE SHOTS YOU NEVER TAKE"**

*Wayne Gretzky*





# HAVING FUN AT WORK?

Yes, work is supposed to be fun:-)

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

We all spend a lot of time at work, even if it's virtual. Many spend more time with their colleagues than they do with friends and family. Sounds familiar?

And when you spend that much time at work, it needs to be enjoyable and fun. That doesn't mean that it has to be "laugh out loud" fun (although that's great too!), but it needs to have great elements of joy and fulfilment at regular intervals.

This in turn means that the relationships that you have with people at work are of great importance to that joy. If you have non-functioning relationships, unresolved conflicts, unhealthy competition or even bullying, then something needs to change.

No-one is an island – being able to work constructively with others increases the opportunity for enjoying work and most definitely for achieving individual, team and business results.

Here are just a few ideas for how you can do this:

- Get to know your colleagues – you spend a lot of time with them!
- Assume positive intent – people usually do the best they can, don't be too quick to judge others
- Take time to listen to each other and recognise that everyone has something unique to contribute
- Encourage healthy and constructive discussions

- Discuss and agree how to best work together as a team
- Bullying is NEVER OK – challenge such behaviour in a respectful and constructive way (practice what you preach, don't bully back)
- Take time for a quick coffee/tea – and talk about something other than work
- Smile – it's contagious:-)

## **FUN - EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY**

Yes, work should, whenever possible, definitely be fun. There is after all no law against it. There should be laughter – not at the expense of work of course, but as something that promotes a better work environment, better collaboration and better work results.

....continued

**“EVEN THOUGH YOU’RE GROWING UP,  
YOU SHOULD NEVER STOP HAVING FUN”**

*Nina Dobrev*



Don't wait to be given permission to have fun, just make it more fun. It can be contagious in a really good way. When you last laughed out loud, what was the reaction – what was the result? Think of the impact that having fun has on the environment around you.

It's very natural to have fun. Sometimes we take work too seriously, as if work is not supposed to be enjoyable in that way. But then we are overlooking the power of fun.

### **BENEFITS OF LAUGHTER**

There are some very cool benefits that you get from laughing.

- Did you know that laughter relieves stress and boosts your immune system?
- Did you know that it improves your mental functioning and creativity?
- How about that it makes people and teams bond, creating better relationships?

Yes, having fun at work is a great success strategy, it's as simple as that. Imagine how energised you feel from having laughed together with your colleagues. It's like an injection of energy – and we can all do with some of that, right?

And genuine, well-intended laughter is of course also so very contagious. Great teams have fun together.

### **LAUGH MORE**

Don't take yourself too seriously. Laugh at the silly things, see the fun in things. Even setbacks can be funny - not then and there - but as you get some distance, and perspective, to them. Allow yourself to laugh and shake things off.

Laugh more at work - it's supposed to be fun:-)

## **"IF YOU ARE TOO BUSY TO LAUGH, YOU ARE TOO BUSY"**

### *Proverb*





A conceptual image showing five people of different heights and builds climbing tall, thin ladders against a solid blue background. The ladders are positioned at regular intervals across the width of the frame. The people are at various heights on their ladders, suggesting a process of growth or reaching different levels. The title 'FEEDBACK OR FEEDFORWARD?' is overlaid in large white letters across the middle of the image.

# FEEDBACK OR FEEDFORWARD?

How to make feedback work

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

Do you like receiving feedback? Or do you like giving it?

If the answer is no to either of those questions, you are not alone. Many people dislike or even fear feedback. And this is probably because people often encounter constructive, corrective feedback more frequently than positive, reinforcing feedback.

We have encountered many managers and leaders over the years who have said: "If I'm not saying anything about their performance, they can correctly assume that all is going well". Good leadership and indeed good followership involves letting people know about their performance regularly, in fact it needs to be part of the DNA of the workplace. Not just at appraisal or review time. We hear so many people surprised at appraisal time, saying "I had no idea they felt like that about me and my work". This applies to the feedback they get regardless of whether it is good or bad.

It doesn't have to be that way. Feedback, when done well, can be one of the most important tools for success in your career. Without it, you are flying blind; you don't know how your actions and behaviours are perceived by others, or what the impact is – good OR bad. Because we need to give and receive much more positive feedback too.

## UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT THAT YOU HAVE

Understanding the impact you have and how you affect others is supremely important in your own learning and throughout your career. It doesn't matter what stage of your career you are at or at what level you are, you can still learn through the feedback you receive. We learn just as much through the positive feedback that we get. We can have positive blind spots as well as not so positive blind spots.

Sometimes these natural strengths that we all have, are such a natural part of our behaviours that we don't even know that we do it. So when someone points them out to us, not only does it help us to use them more, they can also help us with the areas we need to develop in. But if they are a strength blindspot you may not even know that they could help you with your development.

## AN EXAMPLE OF POSITIVE/ STRENGTH BLINDSPOTS

*"When I was younger someone gave me feedback on how good they thought I was at selling. The person thought I was a great sales person because I always kept in touch with clients and that always led to more sales. I also followed up and suggested the next steps in the process. They said I was not only good at it but they had observed me in different situations and learned a great deal from me."*

....continued

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

*John Quincy Adams*



*I was very shocked to get the feedback, as personally I never saw myself as a sales person at all. They had observed me in some situations and asked me what I was thinking during these follow-ups with clients. That question really made me stop and think. As this was such a natural strength for me I really didn't know how I did it. I was just not aware.*

*So I reflected on what I did and said "well, I just believe passionately that I have something that the client really needs and that they may not even know what they need so it is my role to help them work out the next steps in the process." I was also genuinely interested and curious in "how" they were doing and what was currently making things easy for them and where they needed help, and support.*

*On reflection this made me realise how I was using my strength, which up until then had been a positive blindspot for me. The feedback has allowed me to use my strength to help me with a development area. When times were tough and I had to go into difficult situations with clients, I used my natural strength to help me. I simply used my passionate belief that I have something*

*that will help them, which they don't even know that they need. I also had my genuine desire to support them. This helps me when times are tough and I don't want to go to that meeting!"*

### **LET'S CALL IT FEEDFORWARD**

In an effort to revive the whole concept and create a new way of looking at it, why don't we call it feedforward! This is a better description of what feedback can do for you, it can feed you (or others) information that can move you/them forward, to more effective interactions and better results.

Why feedforward often doesn't happen:

- People don't see the benefits of giving feedforward or the consequences of not
- They've had bad experience with it
- They don't know how to do it (giving and/or receiving)
- They don't think they have the time to do it
- They don't think it's their responsibility to give others feedforward
- They are afraid of how the other person may react

### **WHY FEEDFORWARD IS SO IMPORTANT**

Everyone - yes we'll stick out our necks here and say everyone - wants to do a good job, to meet or even exceed their goals, to deliver results. Feedforward is the tool that can help you assess whether you are behaving in such a way that you can deliver the best results possible. This means a balance of positive and constructive feedforward.

As the example above highlights, we all have blindspots. It's very hard to really look at yourself completely objectively. In addition, unless you have the chance to see or hear yourself recorded, you don't really see or hear what other people experience. You are also not aware of how you can affect the way they feel through your behaviours.

The best feedforward is objective and behavioural, it focuses on behaviours, which are often easier for others to see.

If someone can show us what we do well and what we can do better, we can repeat and multiply what we do well – and change what's not working for us.

...continued





A client we recently worked with was blown away by the positive feedback he received in his 360 feedback process. Becoming aware of what others appreciated in him, lifted him and energised him to do more with all his strengths and capabilities. He just hadn't realised quite how much he impacted other people in a good way. Up until then his impact had been accidental and now with his new awareness it can be intentional and even more consistent.

Feedforward is not just a "nice to have". It is much more important than that. When feedforward is shared in a good way; constructively, supportively, objectively and respectfully – it can make the other person really listen – and only when we really listen can we understand and experience the feedforward and start to see the benefits of it – what it can do for us.

Let us share another of our many personal and professional examples of feedforward to explain what we mean.

*"One of the best experiences I've ever had with feedback, came from my manager some 20 years ago when I was relatively new as a leader. I thought I was quite a good communicator and took pride in my ability to express myself clearly. In a meeting with a senior person in the organisation, I posed some questions, challenging what he had said – in what I thought was an effective way, although I didn't really get a great response. After the meeting, my manager came up to me and said: "I know you have a lot of good things to say and your questions are relevant, but whenever you challenge someone, your body language and your tone of voice become aggressive, and for that reason, people get defensive and don't quite hear what you say – and you aren't having the impact you could have, if you asked your questions another way. And I think it's a shame, because as I said, you have a lot of good things to say and could contribute more."*

*I was horrified! I had no idea that was how I was coming across.*

*And at first I didn't want to take it onboard – it couldn't be true, surely!*

*And as the shock subsided, I realised that she had actually given me a great gift. She could just as easily not have said anything (it probably would have been easier) but she cared enough to tell me as it was, because she wanted me to grow, she wanted me to be able to be more, to do more. And I was grateful beyond words. If she hadn't told me I might still have been putting people off, unaware of my impact."*

As this example shows, if you give honest, helpful feedback, focused on observed behaviours and the impact of these, which emanates from good intention and care for the other person, then feedback is incredibly useful. It becomes constructive feedforward.

**In the next issue of IMPACT, we will continue exploring this topic by focusing on how to create a feedforward culture and how to do feedforward well.**

**"THE TWO WORDS 'INFORMATION' AND 'COMMUNICATION' ARE OFTEN USED INTERCHANGEABLY, BUT THEY SIGNIFY QUITE DIFFERENT THINGS. INFORMATION IS GIVING OUT; COMMUNICATION IS GETTING THROUGH."**

*Sydney J. Harris*







# A STORY: A TEAM CONNECTS

What happens when team members  
don't just 'talk shop'

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

This story is from our first leadership book, 'The Team Formula; A Leadership Tale of a Team who found their Way', written in a story format. It takes place in the world of international business where, as a result of an acquisition, two companies merge creating a team: A team struggling with conflicts and dishonesty, but also showing glimpses of loyalty and hope. Stephen, the team's leader, is challenged to get them working together.

Lunch was set up in the restaurant in the conservatory, where the lawn outside ran all the way down to the riverbank. The imposing main building of St Hilda's College stood proudly in the distance on the other side of the water.

The black and white tiled floor gave the restaurant an efficient flair. The grand arches of the conservatory windows meant the room was bright and airy. It was altogether a pleasant space, with a relaxed atmosphere. Two other groups were seated for lunch as Stephen and his team were shown to the Black Sparrow table. As they took their seats, the waitress, with a welcoming smile, introduced the buffet table at the back of the room. When they were finally seated with their plates filled, Laura said: "Before you start..."

JR already had his fork in mid-air and froze. He thought that Laura was about to say grace: "Maybe this is one of those Oxford traditions?"

"... your lunch" continued Laura "I'd like to set another ground rule. Over lunch, please don't talk about work. You can discuss any subject, just not work, OK? Bon appétit!"

*Laura observed how JR and Sophia started talking straight away, their heads bent towards each other, smiling and joking.*

Conversations flowed all around the table. And then an outburst of laughter from Sophia halted their conversations.

*"What's so funny?" Anna smiles and looked enquiringly at Sophia, "Please share".*

*Sophia chuckled, "JR is so hilarious! He just makes me laugh. Do tell the others, JR!"*

*"Oh, it was just one of those language mix-ups between American and British English, a story of my missing pants. Needless to say, the British hotel was not too eager to go looking for my pants when my assistant called to say I had left them behind in the room. I'll leave it there" he said with a huge JR smile.*

*They were all howling with laughter and the lunch continued with the same light-hearted frivolity.*





## ANALYSIS

This lunch took place during a team offsite where the team had spent time getting to know each other and figuring out how to work together. During this lunch, it started to become clear that the team was showing more and more signs of opening up. Things were progressing as expected for this kind of session. It was forcing them to start to reflect on how they were working together, as well as just having some fun together and getting to know each other, something that was obviously starting to build trust. By letting their guards down and not talking about work, they are actually starting to create a different type of bond than one just based on a shared purpose, they are connecting on that pure human level, which is crucial for high-performing teams. And they are having fun doing it. And that's all setting them up much better for continuing their team building work.

**“FIND A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO CHALLENGE AND INSPIRE YOU, SPEND A LOT OF TIME WITH THEM, AND IT WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE FOREVER.”**

*Amy Poehler*

This story and abbreviated analysis is an excerpt from  
"The Team Formula: A Leadership Tale of a Team who  
found their Way", MX Publishing 2013



# IMPACT HACK #6 CHANGE

**4 proven hacks  
for dialling up  
your impact during  
times of change**

**BY MANDY FLINT &  
ELISABET VINBERG HEARN**

Change is a constant, we all know that. And supporting others through change is part of your role as a leader so you definitely want to maximise your impact in this area.

Here are 4 quick proven impact hacks to consider when wanting to dial up your impact during times of change.

## **BE AWARE OF EMOTIONS**

Change is inherently emotional.

Understand what it does to you, the emotional reaction that you have and how that is leaking to others. Others on the other hand may be having a different emotional reaction. A huge part of dealing with change is understanding how you are reacting with others and how they are reacting.

## **WIIFT**

Think: What's in it for them?

Listen. Help people find answers to the questions that matter to them: e.g. What is in it for me? How does it affect me? What does it mean for me, my work, my life, my family, home?

## **INVOLVE PEOPLE**

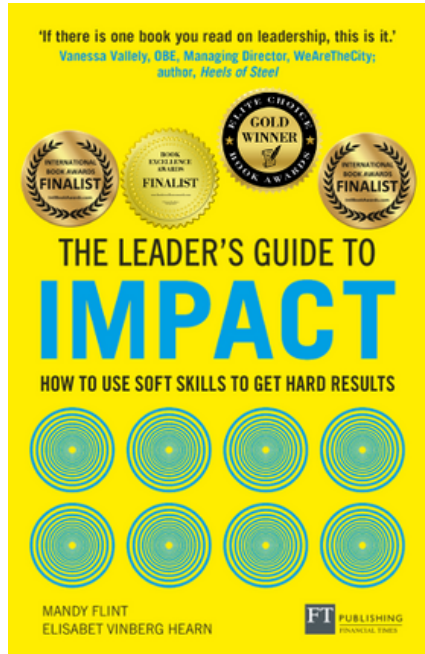
Involve your team and other affected stakeholders. It's not just the role of the leader to lead change. And it's harder to buy into change if you've had no say in it. This is highly relevant right now as many companies are changing to a new hybrid work setup in the wake of the pandemic.

## **SLOW DOWN TO SPEED UP**

Leaders can sometimes operate at such speed, that they are too far ahead of the rest of the team. Slow down, stop and reflect to ensure you are prioritising the changes, doing the right thing at the right time. Hit the pause button now and then – doesn't have to be for long, just a deep breath can be enough.



# CHECK OUT OUR AWARD-WINNING BOOKS ON LEADERSHIP



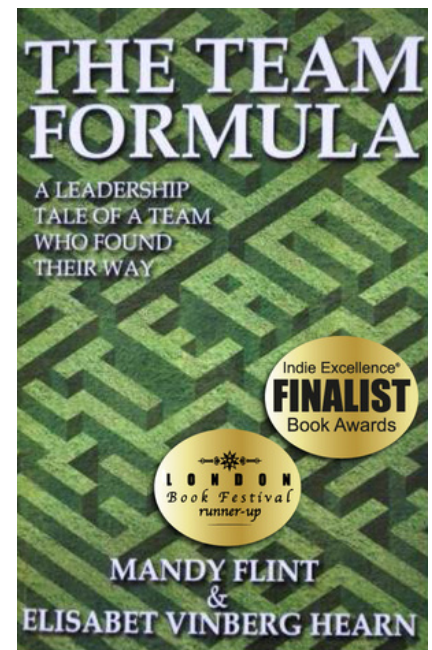
**"A COMPELLING READ FOR THESE DISRUPTIVE TIMES"**

*Amazon reader review*



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

*Amazon reader review*



**"A ROOM WITHOUT BOOKS IS LIKE A BODY WITHOUT A SOUL"**

*Cicero*



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

*Amazon reader review*





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