

# impact

Oct/Nov 2022 | Issue 20

A Leadership Magazine

## FLEXIBLE MIND

A route to innovation

## MENTORING

It goes both ways

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How to create it

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## IMPACT HACK #14

Inspiration





# hello

Welcome to the October/November issue of IMPACT!

This time we focus on the value of a flexible mind, organic and reverse mentoring, leadership and trust, and what we can learn from the trials and tribulations of political leaders in recent history.

And there's a story about culture clashes and how they can be overcome.

The IMPACT HACK this time is all focused on impact through inspiration.

Enjoy the read, thanks for reading!

*Mandy & Elisabet*

**Mandy Flint & Elisabet Vinberg Hearn**



# impact

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# THE BEAUTY OF A FLEXIBLE MIND

How to ignite creativity and innovation

BY MANDY FLINT &  
ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

A few years ago, we had the privilege of being in Oxford, listening to various topics being debated by a group of very verbal 16-year old Year 10 students.

What an amazing experience it was, what incredible flexibility of mind these teenagers were able to convey. We were so very impressed and indeed inspired. And it very effectively highlighted the importance and value of open-minded, flexible thinking to ignite creativity and achieve innovation.

Let's set the scene. It was an International debating competition final with students from seven countries, all debating using the British Parliamentary debating style.

For those of you who are not familiar with this type of debating, this is a quick summary of how it works and was applied in this competition.

- They work and compete together in pairs and each debate has four competing pairs, each taking on one of four debating positions: Opening Government, Opposing Government, Closing Government and Closing Opponent.
- 15 minutes before a debate starts they are told what topic and position to argue (for or against – government or opponent) and if they go first or last (opening or closing) and what topic to debate.
- They then have 15 minutes to agree in their pair how to approach the task. They need to work out a strategy, find arguments for their position and agree how to divide up the proposition or opposition between themselves.
- Each person then gets exactly 5 minutes to put their case across and to respond to questions and rebut what others have said.
- They are not allowed to talk to anyone else or do any research. They only have their own minds to help them.

It was incredible to watch them all as they absorbed themselves into the task, so focused and so open to considering a topic from either angle.

You see, what they did is something we can all probably benefit from practicing more, and which we will absolutely have to be able to do to succeed in the future. We need to be able to challenge our own thinking, step into someone else's shoes, and find new perspectives on any situation.

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## "THE MEASURE OF INTELLIGENCE IS THE ABILITY TO CHANGE."

Albert Einstein



Want to be successful in the future?  
Want to future-proof your leadership?

Then train and stretch your mind to think new thoughts, to consider new arguments and ideas. It's so easy to get stuck in thought patterns, to have firm views about something. And sometimes we don't even realise that we take the easy option and take perspectives we've had before, rather than challenging ourselves to do something different.

Go a step further and come up with counter arguments to your own fixed ideas, unconscious biases and "truths", and see what you discover, what new insights you are rewarded with.

Push yourself to become a truly flexible, open-minded thinker. Never ever take your first thought to be the 'correct' answer.

By challenging our own thinking, we open our minds to new ideas, we listen with greater curiosity to the thoughts of others and we are able to expand our own previous intellectual borders and discover new frontiers.

There's something very compelling and beautiful and inspiring about such a flexible mind.

It shows that we can solve any problem, overcome any conflicts and ultimately create a better world, at work and outside of it. Our minds know no limits, if we allow them to be challenged and expanded.

And just remember or imagine what it feels like to work with someone who's able to do that. And someone who is different to us, who challenges our own thinking and inspires new perspectives and ideas. Pretty amazing, right?

**Are you ready to fully use your beautiful, flexible mind?**

**"IT IS BETTER TO DEBATE A QUESTION WITHOUT SETTLING IT  
THAN TO SETTLE A QUESTION WITHOUT DEBATING IT."**

*Joseph Joubert*







# THE POWER OF REVERSE MENTORING

Yes, mentoring goes both ways

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

In the USA the National Mentoring Day is just around the corner - on the 27th of October - and it is a good reminder of the power of mentoring.

Many mentoring programmes fail though, despite the best of intentions and even well laid out plans.

But it doesn't have to be that way – and the answer spells 'organic mentoring'. If you're not familiar with the concept, then let us have a quick look at it.

## Organic Mentoring

Organic mentoring is when mentoring happens naturally, ie a person seeks out the guidance and support of someone they would like to have as a mentor. It's organic; it meets the mentees specific needs and it is driven by the desire of the mentee and the mentor.

They both see the value and benefits of the mentoring relationship. And when there is that shared desire to make it happen, it goes without saying that the results will follow.

Mentoring programmes in organisations often suffer from some or all of the following challenges:

- They are initiated by someone other than the mentors/mentees themselves (which creates a sense of "oh, it's X's programme", which stops people from taking full responsibility for the experience themselves – they abdicate the responsibility to the initiator)
- People feel they 'have to' participate

- People don't feel they have the time to participate (or that becomes the excuse for not doing more than paying lip service)
- The mentor and mentee don't get on or maybe don't even like or respect each other
- The mentor and/or mentee don't see or understand the benefits of being part of the mentoring initiative
- The mentor and mentee don't take equal responsibility for the success of the mentoring
- People are not sure how to get the most out of it, as the expectations have not been set correctly – or there's no real understanding of how to make it work

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**"BEHIND EVERY GREAT LEADER, AT THE BASE OF EVERY GREAT TALE OF SUCCESS, YOU WILL FIND AN INDISPENSABLE CIRCLE OF TRUSTED ADVISORS, MENTORS, AND COLLEAGUES."**

*Unknown*



- There's a culture in the organisation of starting something but not following it through – it becomes another "great initiative but it just fizzled out as the latest management fad got introduced"

### **How to make Mentoring Programmes a success**

When considering a mentoring programme, we recommend taking an approach that comes as close to an organic mentoring as possible, while at the same time providing the structure and support that is needed to make it as easy and effortless for the mentor and mentee to just get on with the mentoring.

An important part of kicking it all off is to have a very clear message and a communication strategy that ensures everyone involved really "gets" the value of the initiative. The communication should then continue throughout the mentoring timeline to help keep the momentum going, encouraging the participants to keep being proactive, looking for the continuous learning opportunities in the conversations with their mentor or mentee.

Another important ingredient is to prepare both mentors and mentees for their roles. This should include

- Deciding on desired outcomes of the mentoring – what do you want to achieve by having a mentor?
- As a mentee: deciding on what experience/skills/characteristics that you know you can learn from and are therefore looking for in mentor
- As a mentor: thinking about what experience/skills/experience you have that may be of particular interest/value to the mentees in the mentoring programme
- Clarification of roles – what does it mean to be a mentor and what does it mean to be a mentee? What's expected of me?
- Considering how to structure the mentoring interaction for maximum benefit – eg. How long will it go on? How often will we meet/talk? What mentoring principles will we agree on (eg. Confidentiality etc)
- Behavioural recommendations such as keeping an open mind, listening well, using critical thinking

– and letting go of any need to "be right", hence being truly open to the learning opportunity.

In addition to this, we have noticed that the benefits for the mentor are often not highlighted enough, hence not getting to the full potential of the mentoring relationship. The mentor should get as much out of the mentoring as the mentee, as you learn a lot when you start sharing your experience and insights and can see it contribute to the mentor and his/her situation. We have found that mentors who start mentoring and realise that they will also go through a learning experience, recognising that there's plenty to learn from someone more junior, with a different generational perspective, go from strength to strength.

So don't give up on mentoring programmes – when done effectively, they are powerful and creative processes that can fast-forward the learning of all parties involved.

Maybe it's time for you to get a mentor – or become one – to continue future-proofing your leadership.

**"ADVICE IS LIKE SNOW; THE SOFTER IT FALLS, THE LONGER IT DWELLS UPON, AND THE DEEPER IT SINKS INTO THE MIND."**

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge*







# LEADERSHIP YOU CAN TRUST

## 4 ways to build trust

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

There's a lot of talk about trust – all around the world; in politics in particular, but also in business and society as a whole. We would argue that trust is quite a straightforward thing – without it we have nothing.

We may be able to manage without trust for a while, but over time lack of trust erodes engagement and joy at work. And working in a hybrid set-up puts additional demands on trust – it needs intentional focus to achieve it as trust is so much based on connection between people which is harder when regularly face to face.

Leaders that want to create long-term, sustainable results **MUST** be in the trust business. They **MUST** earn your trust. They **MUST** be trustworthy. They **MUST** embody leadership you can trust.

And if you're in the C-suite, you set the tone for the trust through the organisation – trust given and earned starts with you.

If people don't trust us, we risk

- People going behind backs (ours and others)
- People not daring to speak up for fear of retribution
- People cutting corners
- People leaving (employee turnover)

If people trust us, we

- Invite honesty and differing viewpoints
- Secure support
- Build bonds that last

**4 tips for how you, as a formal or informal leader, can build trust**

- Be generous. Share what you know. Give feedback. Give credit where credit is due.

- Be genuinely interested in people. Make/take the time to talk with others and get to know them. Could you trust someone you didn't know?
- Be consistent. Don't keep people guessing. Be emotionally aware; manage your emotions and the impact they have on others.
- Keep your promises. Simple, but oh so effective. Do what you said you were going to do – or apologise and explain why and what will happen next if you couldn't keep the promise.

**We're all in the trust business**

Trust is the foundation for all great leadership and teamwork. And in a world that changes faster and faster, trust will only get more and more important. And we're all in the trust business – every day, in everything we do.

**"NO LEGACY IS AS RICH AS HONESTY"**

William Shakespeare



# LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM RECENT HISTORY

What can we learn from the world of politics?

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

There has been political turbulence in many countries around the world in 2022, just like most other years. Here in the UK we have observed how the last two prime ministers have struggled to have the kind of impact they probably want. **Boris Johnson** has been found to not being as truthful and transparent as people expect of leaders, and it contributed greatly to his downfall. **Liz Truss** (together with her Chancellor of the Exchequer Kwasi Kwarteng) has been found to not understand/anticipate the impact of her decisions on other people, triggering a financial crisis. These examples alone show how important leadership is and how much we need leaders who consider their impact in a holistic way, so that they don't damage the brand (in this case the brand of the UK), and the people they are there to serve. Leaders should do more than that, they should want to do the best they can for those they lead. Political leaders are on the public "stage" all the time and there's a lot we can learn from observing public successes and failures of these leaders.

At the end of 2016 we were asked to write an article about leadership lessons from the world of politics.

And there was plenty to go on. The leadership mistakes or misjudgements were plentiful, particularly in the political world. And as we look at the political leaders of today, around the world, we recognise a number of the mistakes of the 2016 leaders (erratic behaviours, lack of transparency and not owning up to mistakes - to mention just a few!) and that there is plenty that leaders today can learn from the issues in 2016. This is what we wrote.

*Overall, there seems to have been an appalling lack of understanding people's sentiments, with political leaders queuing up to take the prize for who had their head in the sand the most, and not just in the UK. It is important to remember that leadership is the act of influencing others. With this, while we may attempt to lead through the things we say, often it is what we do and how that affects other people that have more lasting results. So, what went wrong in some of the high-profile leadership errors we have observed this year, and what can we learn from them?*

## **Hilary Clinton**

*In losing the US election, it could be argued that Hilary Clinton failed to be an observant enough leader.*

*It seemed like she was not quite picking up on the clues of people's emotions, and perhaps let her ego rule. Would she otherwise have stepped aside and let Bernie Sanders become the Democrat's candidate? She obviously misjudged Trump, although admittedly very few thought he would go as far as he did. Leaders always need to be pragmatic and live in the real world. They need to understand what is really going on, they need to keep getting feedback to allow for that, and they need to be open to feedback even if it is not what they want to hear. Clinton also allowed herself to get emotional at times, reacting badly to Trump's taunting during one of the debates. Here she could have demonstrated greater emotional intelligence, showing more constructive ways to temper passion. Leaders certainly have to speak with passion, while not getting emotional but still be authentic. It's a balancing act.*

## **Jeremy Corbyn**

*One of the key jobs of a leader is to be a visible role model.*

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In failing to communicate or be visible enough in the run up to the referendum, this undermined the official "Remain" stance of the Labour Party. Corbyn misjudged his importance as a role model for his party, failing to create rapport with his immediate team, the shadow cabinet and effectively skipped that level and went straight for the voters. Leadership needs to happen at all those levels – his direct reports and the voters. Where is the shared leadership? He needs to ask himself how can he build trust with his team, as no matter how strong an ideology you have, you still need to include collaboration and compromise with others to make it more likely to happen.

#### **Theresa May**

Stepping into the role of Prime Minister at a time of such uncertainty was never going to be easy. Brexit was always going to be top of the agenda, but the lack of transparency in Theresa May's leadership still begs the question: What is going on? No one knows really.

This is a very old fashioned "control and command" way of leading which is proven to be unsustainable.

It's also not what you would expect in 2016. The current situation requires the highest level of innovation, and to get there you need more people involved, not less. You need high levels of inclusion, calling on different and varied ideas. If this way of leading is simply a short-term strategy to get through a period where direction and control is needed then that is fine, but this behaviour must change if she is going to successfully lead the country through the next phases of Brexit.

#### **David Cameron**

As the likelihood and complexity of a potential exit from the EU became more and more apparent, David Cameron had an opportunity to re-communicate the referendum's purpose. He could have made a statement that it should be advisory rather than deciding, but he didn't, demonstrating a lack of ability or willingness to change.

Leaders always need to own up to mistakes and take brave and courageous steps to do the right thing.

Of course no one is superhuman, and everyone makes mistakes, but leaders who make mistakes must admit to them or trust will suffer. It is ok to not know everything, and it is ok to admit you don't know, in fact the best leaders are comfortable and secure in themselves to be able to say that. They also use smart questions instead of giving smart answers.

#### **Boris Johnson**

Whether it was intentional or not, Boris Johnson and key figures in the "Leave" campaign misrepresented the information around the EU referendum. Such miscommunication was not only bad for trust in his own leadership, but it also further erodes trust in other political leaders.

Johnson's reputation for being outspoken about other nationalities around the world must also now put him in a difficult situation as the Foreign Minister. In leadership, you never know when you will meet someone again or need their support, so it is vital to always be respectful, even if you disagree with them.

**"I'VE COME TO LEARN THERE IS A VIRTUOUS CYCLE TO TRANSPARENCY AND A VERY VICIOUS CYCLE OF OBFUSCATION."**

...continued

**Jeff Weiner**





## Donald Trump

Many will see Donald Trump as one of the winners of 2016, but his inconsistent behaviour has the potential for serious leadership failure.

Erratic behaviour in leadership is not a recipe for building trust. It creates tension, fear and conflict. The way Trump has communicated, whether it is through Twitter or other emotional outbursts, creates a very real risk that he will end up with only yes-sayers around him. When leaders are surrounded by yes-sayers, they are not challenged. This stops creativity and embracing different ways of thinking that would create a better result for everyone.

### So, what can leaders learn from all of this?

- Observe and listen: Be self-aware and socially aware. Things change, so you need to understand what's going on and control the impact you have. See people, listen to them, give them helpful feedback

- Manage VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity): This is Change Management "with bells on," so leaders must find a way of being comfortable in a constantly choppy sea
- Become really inclusive: Share leadership with others. No one has all the answers so sharing the responsibility becomes crucial
- Be curious and open-minded: Embrace new ideas and different opinions because what we knew yesterday may no longer be relevant or correct
- Lead effectively in the virtual world: Find ways to connect with people and build teams remotely
- Be creative with communication: There's so much competition for attention today you must make sure you find effective ways to reach out and be heard
- Share your wisdom: The challenges of the future can only be solved if we let our guards down and start to generously share what we know. Encourage others to do the same and create cross-pollination of ideas and new, creative solutions

- Create a learning environment: Be a role model for constant learning
- Develop effective teams (fast!) and use the power of them: People can achieve more together than individually, so rally your team behind your shared purpose and make the most of the unique strengths that everyone brings
- Drive Business Sustainability: Encourage long-term focus and build awareness of the impact that actions and behaviours have on all stakeholders

All the leadership learning points that we have shared here point to behaviours. We may say one thing, but it's what we ACTUALLY do and how that affects other people that will have lasting results.

Leadership is the important act of influencing others – choose your leadership carefully to create trust and get authentic, powerful, respectful and sustainable results.

# "THE ONLY REAL MISTAKE IS THE ONE FROM WHICH WE LEARN NOTHING."

Henry Ford







# A STORY: THE CULTURE CLASH

About how lack of cultural awareness can trip us up

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

Lindsay had recently arrived in the UK, taking up the role of Senior Vice President. This was her first role outside the US, although she had been with the same organisation for eight years, and she was excited about her career going international. She was looking forward to bringing her experience to a wider audience - she was confident that she had a lot to offer.

It was only a week in when she had her first opportunity to talk to the 200+ employees in her department. Lindsay did what she had always done in these kinds of situations. She went on routine. She stood at the front, using her energy-infused rah-rah approach, as if trying to rally the troops into action.

It didn't go down well. She missed the audience. Many instantly got the impression that she was not sincere, that it was just a put-on surface enthusiasm - some even felt as if they were being manipulated.

She was also not picking up on cues for how others perceived her, she thought everything had gone well, as she was used to it doing.

The result though was that her talk had made people suspicious. They thought she was a lightweight who was not in touch with reality and just too "above it all". It wasn't until one of her peers decided to enlighten her, that the penny dropped and she could reflect on her approach going forward.

Lindsay herself was not specifically aware of her habits, therefore missing that her mannerisms were being interpreted completely differently to what she was used to. She was not familiar with local norms and habits and she hadn't thought about it being different, as they were all part of the same organisation she knew so well, hence not done any research ahead of this event. She had thought of what she wanted to say, but not how she was going to do it or how she wanted to make people feel.

This story is a rewritten excerpt from  
"The Leader's Guide to Impact"  
FT Publishing 2019

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## ANALYSIS

As this short story highlights, what has worked for us in one setting doesn't necessarily translate to a new environment. Lindsay had not considered the cultural differences and how her behaviours may be interpreted (correctly or incorrectly) by the people in the room. And she wasn't really tuned in to the room and therefore wasn't able to pick that up so that she could adjust in the moment.

She was lucky that her peer let her know how she had been perceived, otherwise it would have taken much longer for her to gain awareness and a chance to improve her impact. She was lucky that her peer cared enough to give the feedback.

Great communication, great influence and great impact always comes down to how well we understand our 'audience' and how well we adapt our style to match them. It's about having our people/situation 'radar' on to tell us who we are connecting with, what's going on around us, what's coming up, what's around the corner, so that we can act and behave with integrity and presence and relevance and impact.

We are of course not always going to get it right, but with the intention we are increasing our odds of greater impact. It's better to have some positive impact than none.

**“A NATION’S CULTURE RESIDES IN THE HEARTS AND  
IN THE SOUL OF ITS PEOPLE”**

*Mahatma Gandhi*





# IMPACT HACK #14 INSPIRATION

**4 proven hacks  
for dialling up  
your impact by  
being inspired**

**BY MANDY FLINT &  
ELISABET VINBERG HEARN**

Inspiration is not simply down to chance, it can be pursued and chosen. Your level of inspiration will ignite inspiration in others.

Here are 4 proven impact hacks to consider if you want to increase your impact through inspiration and inspiring behaviours.

## **KNOW WHAT INSPIRES YOU**

If you want to be inspiring you need to be inspired yourself. Use your self-leadership to understand what makes you inspired. Think of times that you were inspired and what made that happen.

### **TO BE INSPIRING, YOU NEED TO BE INSPIRED**

Tap into your inspiration. Do things that inspire you, turn on your inspiration, be genuinely inspired rather than merely 'inspirational'.

## **SHARE YOUR INSPIRATION**

Use inspiration in your work, your communication, your collaboration.

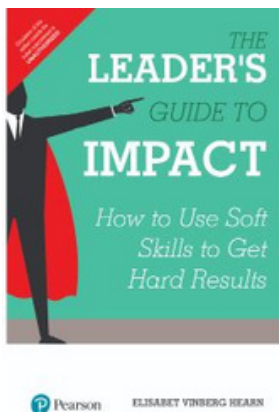
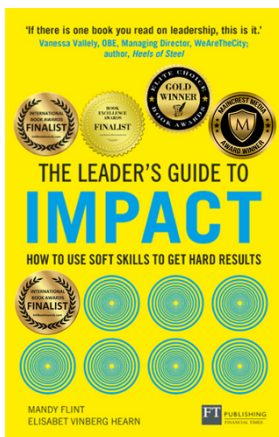
Never go into a meeting or conversation without being inspired.

## **REMEMBER THAT INSPIRATION IS CONTAGIOUS**

When we experience something ourselves, it's almost impossible not to create the same feeling in those around us. So if you for example want others to be collaborative make sure you are yourself inspired about collaboration.

# CHECK OUT OUR AWARD-WINNING BOOKS ON LEADERSHIP IMPACT

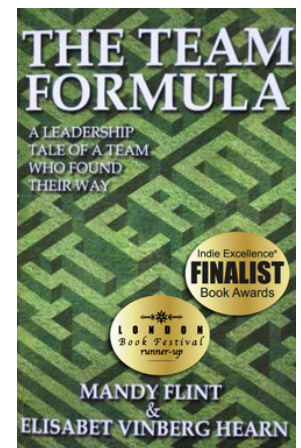
3 books, 11 awards, 8 covers, 4 languages:  
English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese



*The Leader's Guide  
to Impact  
India edition*



*The Leader's Guide  
to Impact  
China edition*



*Leading Teams  
Vietnam edition*



*Leading Teams  
Mexico edition*



*Leading Teams  
China edition*

"WHENEVER YOU READ A GOOD BOOK, SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD A DOOR  
OPENS TO ALLOW IN MORE LIGHT."

*Vera Nazarian*





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