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1 Part

Impact generally

W hat is impact and how do you get it?

The general concept of impact is explored in this first part, with reference to research on the subject.

1

What is impact?

LEADERSHIP FACTS

Did you know?

79 per cent of employees who quit their jobs cite a lack of appreciation as a key reason for leaving.

Source: O.C. Tanner Learning Group¹

Impact on – have a strong effect on someone or something.

Oxford Dictionaries

You always have an impact on people and the world around you, whether you pay attention to it or not. The strength and effectiveness of that impact can vary greatly. Ultimately, everyone is responsible for the impact they have and the impact they want to have. And the more senior you become as a leader, the more people you impact and, therefore, the more responsibility you have for making sure you get it right. That is how important your impact becomes.

To have impact is closely linked to the ability to influence. The difference between influence and impact, even if they

overlap at times and it can be a question of semantics and interpretation, can be described like this – ‘If you can influence you have an impact.’ To influence someone is to make them take on board our ideas, suggestions or directions. This can happen through logic, facts, behaviours, emotions and peer pressure – to mention a few. When you have influenced someone to take on a new thought, argument, action or behaviour, you have had an impact on them.

It is *how* you do business that creates your impact

B2B: business to business.

B2C: business to consumer.

These are common ways of describing if a business is providing products and services to another business or directly to the consumer, the end user.

This is, to some degree, an important distinction as it impacts or even dictates how an organisation is organised and how it needs to operate.

But, ultimately, all business is H2H – it is *human to human*. It is *people* who make decisions to buy or not buy, to stay loyal to a brand or not, to recommend a company or not.

We may, for example, think that we have a contract with an *organisation* to deliver service, but that is only part of the truth – it will always be *people* who decide to sign that contract or not. If that person or those people do not have a great experience with us, they may choose to sign a new contract with someone else instead of signing or re-signing with us.

All of this may be more obvious in a B2C scenario, where a customer can vote with their feet and decide to not come back if the experience was not good.

But do not underestimate the power of the human aspect of *all* contacts an organisation and its people have. It is all about people. *People* make decisions. Connections happen between *humans*.

And this is why *how* we conduct business, *how* we behave in interaction with others, *how* we make others feel, is so important – and, if anything, is only becoming more and more important. Every interaction matters as well as the impact you have in each interaction. You are not just representing yourself, you are also representing the whole organisation and what it stands for.

It is the same within an organisation. No one is an island and, as you do not work in isolation, you need to constantly, continuously have an effect on people around you to achieve sustainable, long-term business results. In fact, throughout the history of mankind, the ability to create relationships with others, to connect and collaborate with others has been a key success factor. The concept and power of impact have always existed.

Impact starts from within

How you feel about yourself affects how you think about yourself, and how you think about yourself affects how you feel about yourself. Everything that goes on inside of you will, in some way, leak into the world around you. So the most important factor to consider when assessing your current impact or planning for your desired impact is how effectively you are leading yourself and taking control of your 'inner system of self'. This inner system consists of

your beliefs about yourself, your self-esteem and level of self-confidence, driven by your thoughts and feelings. It is your whole mental and emotional self and a big driver of everything you do and what the world experiences with you. If you want to have a great impact on the world around, start first within. Get to know and understand yourself so well that you recognise and can take control of the impact you have. We will refer to various aspects of, and tools for, proactive self-leadership throughout the book.

Feeling inspired to inspire others

Recently, we travelled to Belgium where we were due to facilitate a self-leadership development programme that we have delivered many times before. We started the two days not feeling as good as we would want to feel to be truly effective. This was unusual for us. We were both tired and, as we had run this programme many times before, we realised that we needed to do something to make us feel different and reignite our own thoughts and feelings around what we were about to deliver.

Standing at the front of the big room, laid out with 20 chairs and a selection of round tables, we started to prepare the room for the days ahead of us. Elisabet turned to Mandy and said:

'How do we want to *be* today?'

'I think we need to be inspired so that we can be inspiring to others,' Mandy replied. 'I think that will affect the group really positively.'

Elisabet quickly added, 'We need to intentionally *be* inspired and, if *we are*, then this inspiration will leak into the group.'

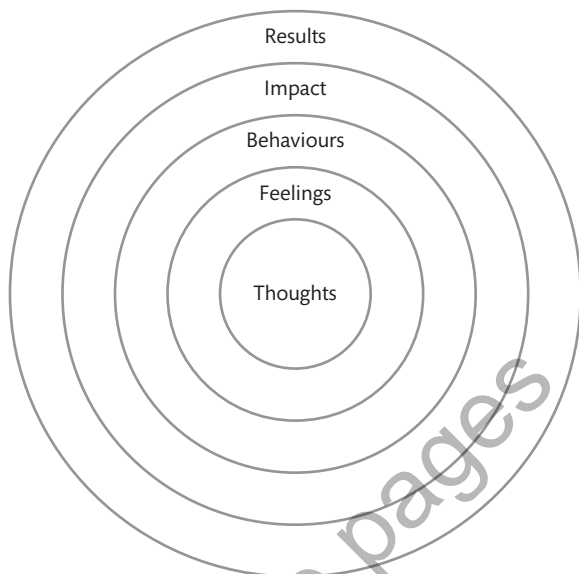
'So, how can we change the way we feel?'

We brainstormed ideas to change that internal feeling and our internal dialogue. Moving from how we did not want the session to be, we started thinking and talking about times we had felt inspired while running this programme and how much we knew it had inspired others as well as us. We reflected on the many times when it had made a big difference to people. That started to inspire us again. We also brainstormed a few ideas of how we could create some additional exercises for the group, as we know that we are both greatly inspired by creative dialogue and action. We got excited remembering numerous stories people had shared with us regarding the progress they had made as a result of the programme. We played stories back to each other, which reenergised us and inspired us. We wanted that result again.

After the session, in the feedback process, almost everyone wrote the actual words that, in some way, they had felt *inspired*. We had not even uttered the word once, but the participants had experienced our heartfelt inspiration and it had been contagious. That was exactly the outcome we had hoped for and expected.

One of the key reminders for us here was that it was not about 'artificially' trying to inspire others from a state of non-inspiration ourselves. No, the key was first to be inspired ourselves, as, when we experience something ourselves, it is almost impossible not to create the same feeling in those around us. Good or bad. So our internal feeling does not just affect ourselves but also our external impact and the results we get.

Effective leadership impact comes down to this: *what state (of mind/emotion) do you want to elicit in others? Therefore, what state do you first need to elicit in yourself?*



The (2020 Vision) Leader Impact Model™ This describes the ripple effect of leading and managing your inner self, which is illustrated in the figure above.

Your impact is about the ripple effect you create

Impact happens on a one-to-one basis, with individuals, and on a one-to-many basis, with teams and groups.

Negative impact may, for example, be as simple as checking emails on your phone when in a one-to-one situation. *How do you think that makes the other person feel? What impact are you having on them? Will they want to go that extra mile for you? And who are they meeting next? How may they affect that person as a result?*

Equally, if you are presenting to a room full of people, handing out awards and getting the recipients' names wrong, your personal brand will be negatively affected. People will feel that

they are not important enough to be remembered or that you did not care enough to pay attention to the details. And people tend to remember those situations, so you will now have to work harder to reclaim some lost credibility and achieve the impact you want.

Positive impact can be as simple as saying thanks to someone who helped. It does not matter how small or large, just taking the time to stop and say thanks can have a huge impact on people. **In the busy world that we live in we can easily forget this important and impactful effort.**

A senior leader shared with us that he created this reaction in a team member whom he had sent an email to.

'It was a simple thank you email for my contribution to the team with some positive comments on developments and progress within a year. He made it personal to me and my situation, I felt very happy, pleased and proud. It made me more confident in my role which gave me more enthusiasm and energy.'

It is a great example of that daily ripple effect we can have.

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

Maya Angelou

Creating an impact strategy

Given that impact is very 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. What all leaders have in common is that they always operate through others; they need to

enable employees to do a great job. This is why your impact becomes your most important strategy in order to deliver the desired and expected results.

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, what you become known for. 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 often more of a subconscious occurrence 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.

If you are a senior leader, your impact is also magnified.

You set the pace for your organisation. You need to be intentional about your impact – you need to lead and role model the kind of impact behaviours the organisation, its people, its customers and all other stakeholders need.

Many people find the whole idea of creating impact challenging as it somehow seems false or conceited to them to *create* impact. They may, therefore, 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. This book is here to make you recognise that creating impact is a positive, powerful and respectful commitment to excellence – and it will tell you how to do it through specific, relevant, applicable solutions. And, most

importantly, the book will also show you how to do it in an authentic way, a way that suits you.

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 ensure you have a strategy for your impact.

Things move fast; we are all surrounded by constant change. Leaders need to create impact in the moment, to not lose the power of that moment. No one is perfect and no one will get it right all the time, but they need to at least seize their most important moments and create the impact that will help them connect with others in a respectful way, to create trust, get others to listen to them, to influence effectively, and to drive results and everything else that comes with leading.

Going into the future, our ability to have a good or even great impact is becoming more and more important. We all need to think about the effect we have 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 organisations 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.

Leaders are often brought in to an organisation or are reassigned to a specific division or region to make a

difference within a given timeframe. Some common examples of that are:

- A CEO is appointed to turn around a failing business;
- A CEO is appointed to lead the organisation through an aggressive growth strategy through mergers and acquisitions;
- A leader is asked to implement a specific change to how the organisation is working;
- An interim leader is asked to keep the organisation afloat while a new permanent leader is identified and hired.

Whatever the reasons are for the finite timeframe, any specific deadline brings about an extra need for putting an impact plan in place, where the leader asks her/himself: *How can I maximise my impact to deliver as expected within the timeframe?*

Whatever your impact ambition is, this book can help you build a tailored *impact strategy* for yourself. All the solutions in the book build on our five-step *impact strategy creator* below. Use it to start taking greater control of your impact by recognising the key areas in which you want to maximise your impact.

Five-step impact strategy creator

	Step	Reflect	Act
Step 1	Decide on the impact you want to have	What impact do you want to have and on whom?	List situations, initiatives, projects, places, teams, people, etc.
Step 2	Clarify what it will lead to	Why do you want to have that impact (what difference will it make)?	Map out the links between your impact and team/divisional goals and organisational vision and mission, etc.

	Step	Reflect	Act
Step 3	Set target date	When do you want to achieve that impact?	Decide on milestones and deadlines, etc.
Step 4	Create an action/behaviour plan	How will you achieve that impact?	List ideas for actions to take and behaviours to adopt. Consider the support you may need from others
Step 5	Decide on success measures	How will you measure/assess your impact going forward?	List possible measurements, such as surveys, feedback, productivity, etc.

Impact through position alone or through behaviour?

Stephen walked through the turnstiles for the first time since being appointed the new chief operating officer.

He was filled with energy and pride, having finally secured the senior position he had so coveted. This had been a long process, as all senior appointments are. He had waited for this day for six months. He had no history in the organisation and had been given a blank canvas for his role.

Sophia met him and showed him to his desk. *Desk?!* Stephen swivelled around, eyes darting to try to locate his office.

There wasn't one, he realised. Before he could say anything, he was quickly whisked off to a meeting with the rest of the executive team, in an opaque glass-fronted conference room. His new career chapter started and, before he knew it, it was time for lunch and his first moment to reflect on his new reality.



Why don't I have an office? How will this work? How will people know I'm senior? I need to show my authority and get myself an office!

Stephen did not get an office. The CEO had a firm policy that none of the executives would have an office, as Stephen realised when talking to a few of his peers. Stephen was surprised and initially perplexed and, ultimately, it forced him to think differently about his impact as COO. His impact would depend on his executive presence rather than the visual statement of power that comes with an office.

Someone who needs formal, external confirmations of power and position often can appear less senior and powerful than those who do not. The reason is that these external symbols are not a representation of real impact, only position and, if it looks like you need them, your ability to have impact may suffer. Sustainable, long-term impact comes down to behaviours, not symbols or what you have.

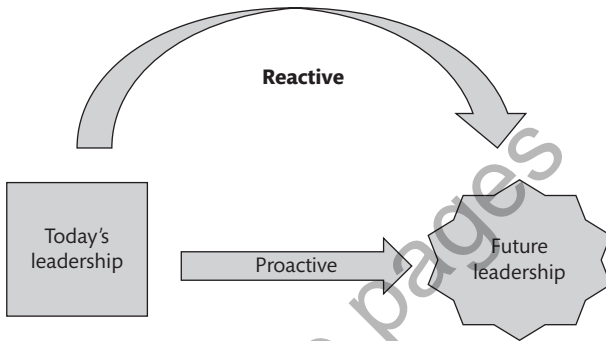
Sustainable, transformational change and impact happens at a behavioural level.

Taking responsibility for your impact

Whether he fully realises it or not, Stephen, in the preceding story, has a responsibility for his impact. Any leader has a responsibility to the people they lead: to add value to them, to be of service to them. In fact, the title CEO may well stand for chief *enabling* officer in addition to the more common chief executive officer and, if we extend that to all leaders, they are also in the business of enabling their employees and teams.

Yes, leaders have a responsibility to be intentional about their impact. And this is a great opportunity to make sure

you are inspired and therefore inspiring, to truly feel good about what you do. Intentional, proactive impact increases your levels of success. It puts you in greater control of the outcome and it gets you there more quickly than the reactive learning over time would do.



Understanding your audience

Every single person is different from the next and, therefore, needs to be approached differently. The Platinum Rule comes into play here – ‘treat others as *they* want to be treated’ - as opposed to the more commonly known Golden Rule – ‘treat others as *you* want to be treated’. With the Platinum Rule, you do not assume that everyone is the same as you.

The Platinum Rule: treat others as *they* want to be treated.

Great communication, great influence and great impact always comes down to how well you understand your ‘audience’ and how well you adapt your style to match them. You are having your people/situation ‘radar’ on to tell you what is going on around you, what is coming up, what