

# impact

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A Leadership Magazine

## BACK TO NORMAL?

How to lead in the new hybrid work environment

## COVID-19 POLL

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A match made in heaven?

## 7 STEPS TO TEAM SUCCESS

Kick off the autumn with impact

## A STORY

No purpose, no team



# hello

Great to see you here - welcome!

September is here and this issue of impact kicks off the autumn by bringing you another collection of our articles on leadership.

The global pandemic is creating a new hybrid work environment and there is a lot we can do as leaders to make that experience for employees as positive, collaborative and engaging as possible. That's what the September issue is all about.

And we'd love to hear your thoughts on the topics. Please connect via [www.2020visionleader.com](http://www.2020visionleader.com). Thanks.

Enjoy the read!

Mandy Flint & Elisabet Vinberg Hearn

# **impact**

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# BACK TO WORK BUT IT'S NOT BACK TO NORMAL

How to lead in the new 'hybrid normal'

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

We are in the middle of a global pandemic where leaders are challenged and tested in a way never seen in our lifetime. How leaders respond, how they inspire hope and engage in collaborative dialogue or not, will become their legacy. Leadership matters more than ever. That's a fact.

Through the summer, following lockdowns and recommendations all around the world to work from home, business and political leaders have been trying to figure out how to best make the next step; coming back at work in this 'new normal', work.

What we know for sure is that autumn 2020 brings a new way of working, a 'new normal' where some people are not expecting to be back in an office until 2021 or even later, while some people are slowly starting to go back now.

## CHALLENGES

This brings a number of challenges for leaders to consider. Here's a few of them:

1. Some people worry about going back, because of the contagion risk

2. Some people wish they could go back, as they are finding it challenging (e.g. poor work environment) or lonely to work at home, or both
3. Some people have concerns about losing their jobs as a result of the economic downturn
4. The pandemic, in some instances, has caused mental health issues for people
5. Having onsite team members and offsite team members, can create two disparate groups, where those offsite can feel particularly left outside the perceived 'main circle'
6. Keeping team trust high and not causing a divide and sub-groups or cliques
7. Keeping team energy and engagement high, while not assuming those in the room are engaged and those who are not are not
8. Moving back from online to in person - does it feel different now? If so, what does that bring?

## SOLUTIONS

Here are some things to think about, solutions to deploy to make the return to the 'new normal' a success:

### Think about PEOPLE first

Everything else can take second place.  
Listen, care, connect.

### Look to yourself

How you behave, how you show up will impact people around you. Take the time to center yourself, putting yourself in a good state of mind. Leadership is contagious so lead yourself first.

### Focus on physical safety,

including ensuring that people can work while still keeping the social distancing that is needed to reduce the risk of infection. Be very clear what those arrangements are, that everyone understands them and why they are important and need to be followed.

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## **Make inclusivity your top focus, during this time in particular**

Include everyone equally, regardless of where they are based or any other differentiator. This is the time to show through actions and behaviours that you are serious about having an inclusive workplace, an inclusive culture where people connect and engage with each other and can be creative together.

## **Put extra effort into interpersonal moments**

In a recent global poll (see the results on page 7), we asked leaders what their biggest leadership challenges during the pandemic are and the second biggest challenge came out as: ***Missing being with people and the interpersonal aspects of that.*** Yes, we are social beings, so put extra effort into those interpersonal moments, especially for those who are still working remotely.

**Involve your team in creating the practicalities of hybrid working;** discuss and agree how to work together and how to support each other. Be proactive about it. Focus on output, not input. When you have people working remotely, you must trust them to deliver without micro-managing.

## **Create an environment of psychological safety**

It's always been important, but even more so now. The challenges are not over and everyone will need to be able to communicate and collaborate with each other, respectfully challenge each other in dialogue to identify issues and create solutions. And for people to want to do that, they need to feel safe to speak up, to share their thoughts, to try, fail and learn (fast) and move on. How you respond when people have the courage to speak their mind makes all the difference.

## **This can be a time for contention and potential conflict**

Allow people to talk about their concerns, recognising that these disruptive times can be very stressful and that not everyone will react the same way. Just talking about a problem or concern, expressing how someone feels helps to ease said concern, it's a good first step. And you can then support them in building strength and resilience to find the solutions they need. You need to make time and space for this in a virtual and office mixed world. So, ensure you have regular informal check-in points.

## **Build and work on Team Trust**

The team dinners, chats and water cooler conversations are harder in this mixed virtual/office world, so recreate that by doing things like having stand up meetings with people in the office together (safely socially distanced) and include those working virtually by linking them in using a form of technology.

Get the office and virtual world mixed. Have some team meetings that are 'just' social check-ins. As most of us have been working in the virtual world we are much more aware of the impact we have when online so when we go back into a work space we now have a new perspective on it so people are likely more respectful and perceptive of those in the room and those online than before.

## **Empower with Digital Tools**

Make sure you all have the digital tools that will allow you to collaborate and communicate across the hybrid (remote and office) workplace.

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## **Enable a healthy work/life integration**

When working from home, the lines between work and home life get blurred. Help people overcome that by not sending emails around the clock. Be a role model for a healthy work/life integration.

## **Give your team members (more) 1-to-1 time**

To pick up on the office/work 'vibe' you will need to carry out and put into the calendar more informal 1-to-1 time to fill in the gaps and the void that the virtual /office mixed environment creates.

Use the informal check-ins to pick up on how people feel, what they think and what they need.

Like with everything else, this 'new normal' will not just be plain sailing. And that's OK. Be intentional in your leadership of it, allow enough time in your busy schedule to manage the 'new normal'. It's inevitable that you and your team will try things out (how to work) and realise that it didn't turn out exactly the way you wanted it to. And keep in mind that the 'new normal' will keep changing.

We don't know what it will look like in a year's time and beyond. The power lies in exploring that together and learning together. Your role is to lead your team through that.

No one can have all the answers, no one is an expert in this global pandemic. The power and the answers are in all of us, sharing and working on this together, and that needs to be led by a powerful leader.

**That is you.**

**"HUMAN BEINGS ARE SOCIAL CREATURES. WE ARE SOCIAL NOT JUST IN THE TRIVIAL SENSE THAT WE LIKE COMPANY, AND NOT JUST IN THE OBVIOUS SENSE THAT WE EACH DEPEND ON OTHERS. WE ARE SOCIAL IN A MORE ELEMENTAL WAY: SIMPLY TO EXIST AS A NORMAL HUMAN BEING REQUIRES INTERACTION WITH OTHER PEOPLE."**

*Atul Gawande*



# POLL RESULTS: LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES DURING COVID-19

The poll ran 7 May – 14 June.  
We invited leaders from 20+ countries to participate.

WE ASKED: *What are you finding the most challenging in your leadership role during the COVID-10 crisis?*

Choose up to 5 answers.

104 responded (anonymously)



## LEADERS' RESPONSES TOP 5 CHALLENGES

% OF RESPONDENTS WHO CHOSE EACH ALTERNATIVE

**1. Balancing the short term crisis with the long-term strategy**

64.4%

**2. Missing being with people and the interpersonal aspects of that**

46.2%

**3. Keeping my team engaged and included remotely**

32.7%

**4. Focusing on the future and how to come out of the crisis**

30.8%

**5. Leading the team through the ongoing change and uncertainty**

28.8%

[For full results and more information about the poll, please click here](#)

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# FROM UNHELPFUL TO HELPFUL CONFLICT

Conflict, if carefully managed,  
can be a great vehicle for creativity

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

Conflict is often seen as something negative, usually as a result of people having experienced conflict and found it to be painful and demotivating, with an unhealthy impact on the work culture and climate.

BUT conflict doesn't have to be negative at all. It all comes back to how we perceive it. We can either see it as a good thing or a bad thing – or something in between. In fact, conflict is only a difference of opinion, which is a major creative force, if seen and utilised that way.

When you are working on collaborating more, which we all have to do to survive and continue to be successful in this fast-changing world, it is not just about keeping up, but staying ahead and that makes collaboration of critical importance.

And helpful conflict plays a role in collaboration. Collaboration doesn't just mean that we all get along 'nicely' and everything is smooth sailing. It means we need to have conflict to challenge our thinking, allow us to be creative and innovate.

Unhelpful conflict is when people start thinking in terms of 'us and them', getting entrenched in their own opinion, viewing others with suspicion, distrust and even dislike because they in some way are different (i.e. 'not thinking the same as me').

Helpful conflict is an inclusive, curious, open minded, thought provoking exchange between people that enables new ideas and insights to come to the surface and be turned into new innovative solutions to challenges and opportunities.

It happens when diverse people and ideas come together, wanting to hear each other out and wanting to improve on the status quo.

Some of the most successful teams and organisations are those that embrace differences, in whatever shape it comes – background, experience, personality, culture and more.

Here's why conflict is needed in collaboration:

- If everyone is thinking the same, no one is thinking.
- To get away from echo chambers.
- To avoid 'group think'.
- To challenge our thinking and the status quo.
- To create new solutions to problems.
- To think creatively and innovate.

## Transforming conflict

As a leader there's a lot you can do to help create a culture of healthy, collaborative conflict. Let's look at how unhelpful conflict can be transformed into conflict that promotes collaboration and enables creativity and innovation.

1. **Look at conflict as a good thing**  
Ultimately it comes down to mindset and perspective and it starts with your own. How do you view conflict? Do you think it's negative, or an opportunity for something better? Make sure your own perspective on conflict is constructive and hopeful, as it will impact everything you say about it.

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What you think and feel about conflict will 'leak' and it's crucial that you authentically frame conflict as something good, useful and unthreatening if you want others to develop that mindset too.

## 2. Create a culture of learning – be a role model for learning

To create collaboration, you need a culture of learning. To learn is not about needing to be right, you can't enter with the feeling that if someone else's opinion is right, that makes mine wrong.

We need to be open to learning from others and recognise that together we can achieve more that way than we would alone. There are very few things in this world that are categorically 'right' or 'wrong'. Most 'right and wrong' answers are simply opinions, as opposed to irrefutable facts.

As we continue to live and thrive in a fast-paced world, how could we possibly know everything? As the world shifts and changes so fast, you cannot be a know-it-all, you cannot possibly keep up alone - you need to work with others to keep up. The speed of change means we all need to continuously learn and grow. We need to create a culture of being a learn-it-all.

## 3. Lead with purpose

Help people find their shared purpose. If they can see that they have something in common, something that is expected of them (i.e. a win/win outcome), then they will be more likely to look at each other with collaborative intention.

This means you need to be more intentional about that shared purpose. You need to make the implicit more explicit, and really spend time together to explicitly work out that shared purpose. People may have a difference of opinion on what that shared purpose is, and that is OK, but make sure that it is discussed and agreed upon together.

## 4. Lead with trust

Without trust, unhelpful conflict flourishes. Consider what you can do to make people trust each other. Do they need to get to know each other better? It's hard to trust people you don't know, after all.

Lead the way here by showing trust and even asking for help, as both these behaviours increase the levels of oxytocin (the brain chemical for psychological safety) in others.

When people feel safe, they are more likely to want to connect and collaborate.

## 5. Value and recognise difference of opinion

When people are courageous enough to bring up a different perspective on a topic, thank them for it. (Yes, we've used the word 'courageous' intentionally, as people's fear of conflict often stops them from expressing themselves, which ironically creates resentment and more conflict over time).

Point out that this new outlook brings something new to the discussion. It creates a necessity to think again, to explore other options. Conflict needs to be led, facilitated and managed carefully so that people's emotions don't run away with them.

Intentionally recognise and acknowledge people when they demonstrate a difference of opinion and challenge the thinking of the team.

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Make people feel that having a different opinion is OK. When you recognise those behaviours, you will start to create a shift in the culture, to a more collaborative culture with conflict being part of how people are more creative.

#### **6. Choose your words carefully and use questions intentionally**

Getting people to want to open up to collaboration fuelled by healthy debate can be greatly impacted by the words we use.

It makes a difference when you use phrases such as: 'thank you. That's really interesting. I hadn't thought about that. We haven't found a way forward yet, but we will'.

Use questions to encourage people to think again and explore more answers. Here are some examples:

- Can you tell me more about that?
- What are you hoping to achieve?
- What if there is another way?
- What else could we do?
- Would it be of interest to explore this some more together?
- What can we all agree on that needs doing?

#### **7. Facilitate a dialogue between the 'conflicting' parties**

Conflict needs to be led, facilitated and managed carefully so that people's emotions don't run away with them. Volunteer to facilitate a dialogue (or coach leaders in doing this) between the people experiencing conflict.

Plan for it by thinking through in what order you want to talk about things, who to pose questions to and so on. Remind the parties of their shared purpose and ask questions as those above to engage people in dialogue.

Draw out conclusions, praise participation and wrap up by confirming what has been agreed and what the next steps are.

Perceived conflict is driven by behaviours first and foremost; it tends to not necessarily be what someone says but how they say it that creates a negative reaction in someone else. Keep focused on behaviours and start with your own.

Here are some examples of behaviours that can diffuse and turn around unhelpful conflict:

- Being curious and open-minded.
- Listening without prejudice.
- Caring for and taking an interest in others.
- Admitting to mistakes and learning from them.
- Asking for help and valuing others input.
- Being optimistic that agreement and solutions can be found.

What behaviours do you want to role model as a leader to create helpful, collaborative conflict?

**"THE REAL VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY CONSISTS NOT IN SEEKING NEW LANDS BUT IN SEEING WITH NEW EYES."**

*Marcel Proust*





# 7 STEPS TO TEAM SUCCESS IN 2020 AND BEYOND

Because getting a team to work well together doesn't happen by chance

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

Getting a team to work well together doesn't happen by chance.

It requires intention, commitment and a focus on both structure/task and behavioural habits.

When work starts in earnest after the summer it's a great time to stop for a moment with your team and discuss: "How do we best work together to best achieve our goals, and make this a truly great place to work? How can we make this year and beyond our best years yet?" And this is EXTRA important in the 'new normal'.

One crucial ingredient in that dialogue is to create a Team Charter. A Team Charter is a document that describes the purpose, framework and agreements of the team. Creating a Team Charter is a shared process (not just a leadership task), hence making it a powerful and visual shared commitment.

A Team Charter that is created by everyone, is owned by everyone and therefore is carried out by everyone. Involvement of the whole team is key here.

Each Team Charter is unique to the team, but typically it includes at least these 7 steps:

1. Team purpose and clear links to the organisation's vision and purpose (how you as a team make a difference)
2. Expectations and goals (what are you expected to do and achieve this year?)
3. Roles and responsibilities (who does what, what are the overlaps and collaboration opportunities?)
4. Skills and expertise needed to fulfil purpose (is there anything new you need to learn and/or how can team members' skills/expertise be shared?)
5. Resources needed to fulfil purpose (e.g. what data and tools do you need to do a great job?)
6. Operating guidelines: behaviours and how the team will work together to fulfil the purpose (e.g. how should you treat each other, how should you communicate, help each other, spend time together?)
7. Signed agreement/commitment

Some seem obvious and almost implicit, don't they?

Well, if that's the case, then ask yourself as a team; *why aren't we doing it then?* The answer is often: *well, it seemed so obvious that it almost shouldn't be needed.* In reality, we often overlook the obvious or seemingly 'simple' things, but they are often the most powerful.

And if you are doing it, challenge yourself on how you can make it even better, strive for more together. You may have these 7 steps in some implicit form, it is also important to make them explicit for all to agree to openly.

So yes, as you reflect on these 7 steps, some are probably already in place, but it is still crucial to review them as a team to reconfirm or indeed update your shared agreement on those important ingredients of teamwork. The steps that definitely need updating each year, for every team, are 2, 6 and 7.

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Once you have documented the team agreements steps 1-6 (and any other topics you have chosen to include as a team), make sure each team member gets invited to sign the document (step 7).

Signing the Team Charter agreement signals real commitment and cements it. You can even call it a team *promise* – after all, a promise feels even more powerful and fully engages our personal commitment to the team.

If you need further guidance on how to complete a Team Charter, there's a more in-depth guide in "Leading Teams; 10 Challenges 10 Solutions", our award-winning book which also provides many other team success solutions.



**"INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENT TO A GROUP EFFORT – THAT IS WHAT MAKES A TEAM WORK, A COMPANY WORK, A SOCIETY WORK, A CIVILIZATION WORK."**

*Vince Lombardi*

**"NO ONE CAN WHISTLE A SYMPHONY. IT TAKES A WHOLE ORCHESTRA TO PLAY IT."**

*H. E. Luccock*



# A STORY: A PURPOSE-LESS TEAM

A short story about what happens  
when there is no shared purpose

BY MANDY FLINT & ELISABET VINBERG HEARN

It was time for another team re-organisation. Ted found himself reporting to a new manager again. It was his third in two years.

I don't mind the new reporting line, Donald is not a bad leader, but it means I'm now forced into a team with Trevor! It really doesn't make sense to me that we should now somehow work together. We have absolutely nothing in common. In fact, I don't think he even comes close to understanding or representing what my team does, so it feels false, forced and uncomfortable. And now Donald wants us to have some kind of shared team event. I need to talk to him about all this; it just doesn't make sense.

Ted's thoughts were interrupted by Donald's very timely entrance into his office.

"Hi Ted. I'm glad I caught you. I need to check some possible dates with you for the planned team event".

Ted looked down rather than meeting Donald's gaze. "OK" he muttered.

Unperturbed, Donald continued. "I want it to be the 10th of February. Does that work for you?"

"Not sure I can make the 10th. February overall isn't a good month for me."

"Well, it needs to be February. What date can you do?

"I don't want to seem uncooperative, but I don't actually see the point in a team event with Trevor's team. The only thing we have in common is reporting into you. That doesn't make us a team, not in my mind anyway". Ted paused.

Donald hadn't even considered that there might be resistance to his plans of bringing together his direct reports.

"What's the problem? You do both report into me and that makes you part of my team. So the team event is going ahead. So can you please let me know what dates you can do in February?"

"Well, I could maybe make the 12th work" Ted admitted. "But what are we going to do? What's the point of this event?"

Donald was getting annoyed and snapped: "Oh come on, Ted. This is how it is. We have to be a team because you all report into me. Let's just get on with it! This session will help us do that. We'll all get to know each other better and that will be that." His tone indicated that the conversation was over.

When Donald had left, Ted was even more frustrated than he had been before their conversation.

*I don't want to be directly associated with Trevor. My team is very different to his. I'm struggling to see what we have in common.*

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**"WHEN YOU'RE SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE WHO SHARE A PASSIONATE COMMITMENT AROUND A COMMON PURPOSE, ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE"**

*Howard Schultz*

## ANALYSIS

We have seen similar scenarios multiple times, where people co-exist in some way but they haven't realised the potential for collaboration and greater, shared results.

In this case Ted clearly can't see what Trevor and him have in common, and therefore he rejects the idea of them being a team. There is no obvious shared purpose for them both, or their teams. They are not working towards the same goals and they are not heading in the same direction.

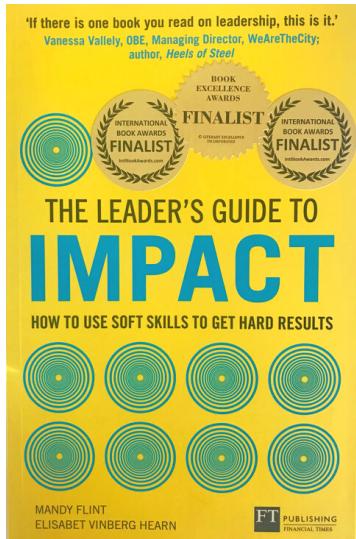
So what makes a team? A team are a group of people working together to achieve something, to get somewhere. They have a shared purpose (a reason for being a team) and shared or at least linked goals (they need each other to get there).

What this reminds us of is how important it is to start any team setup with an exploration of what the shared purpose is. If team members are not aware of a shared purpose, there will be no obvious reason to work together, or to even prioritise spending time together or helping each other. There won't be a feeling of being in the same boat and needing each other to be successful.

In the story above, Donald needs Ted and Trevor to be a team, for his own practical purposes as they both report to him, but he is unable to give a convincing reason for this, or just hasn't considered that he needs one.

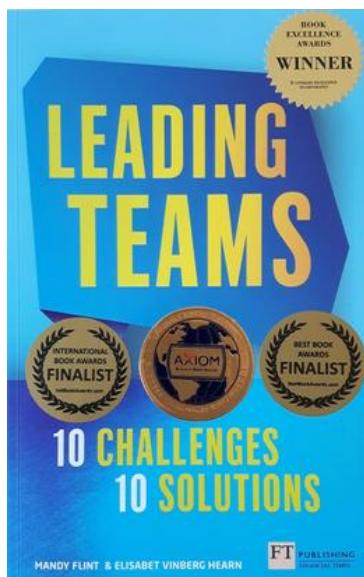
Does your team have a clear team purpose? Have you explored it together, to engage everyone in the mega-goal that is a team's purpose? If not, this is a great time to do so. Possibly even more important than normal as your team may not all be in the same place and could benefit from the additional strength and guidance that a purpose gives. And as the previous article shows, it's the very first important step of team success.

# CHECK OUT OUR AWARD-WINNING BOOKS ON LEADERSHIP



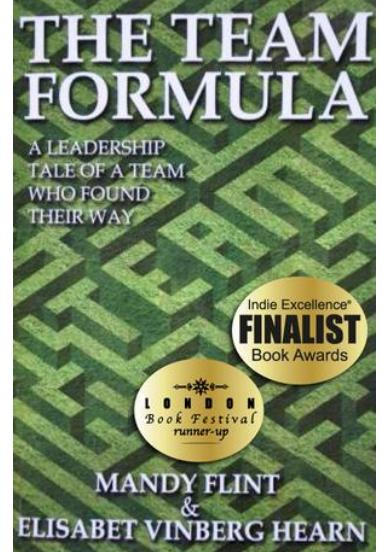
"A COMPELLING READ FOR THESE DISRUPTIVE TIMES"

Amazon reader review



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

Amazon reader review



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

Amazon reader review

"THE MORE THAT YOU READ, THE MORE THINGS YOU WILL KNOW. THE MORE THAT YOU LEARN, THE MORE PLACES YOU'LL GO."

Dr. Seuss



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