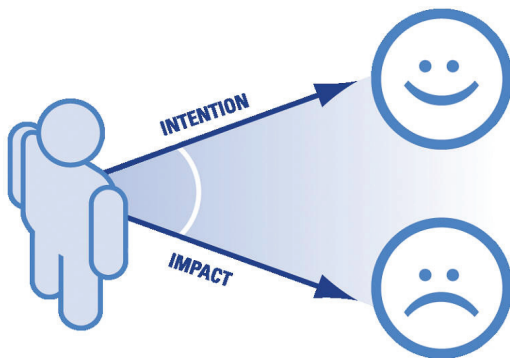


Impact Leadership



It's not your **intention** that counts, it's your **impact**.

All of the Corporate Leaders I work with have good values and positive intentions. Their intention is to 'walk the talk', inspire a shared vision and enable others. What the world sees is their impact and not their intention. Have you ever been surprised by the impact of your well-intentioned behavior?

When I asked Gary if he thought he was a good listener he said yes. Gary does listen, it's just that he is very busy and usually does other tasks at the same time. He scribbles notes, loses eye contact and stops listening when he thinks he's heard enough. He also gets a little defensive when people disagree with him.

When I asked Gary's colleagues what he could improve that would make the most difference to his impact as a leader, they almost all said 'listening'. "He doesn't really listen to us" said one of his direct reports, "I don't think he's that interested in what we have to contribute". Actually, Gary is very interested in his team's contributions; he just didn't realize he was having the opposite impact.

In any situation there can be a distortion between our intention and our impact. Something happens somewhere in that space between our words and actions and the way they are received by other people. To be a successful leader you need to understand the impact that your behavior has on others; and then know how to create the impact that you want. It's not enough to have good intentions because it's how others' receive your behavior that ultimately counts.

The good news is that you can gain insight into both the positive and negative impact of your behavior and you can also broaden your repertoire of positive behavioral skills. You can also learn how to be strategic and tactical in communicating with the people you need to influence. The end result is that your behavior is in alignment with your intention and you have the impact that you want.

Here's how:

Step 1:

Get feedback about the impact of your behavior. You can do this in a variety of ways: get someone who is unbiased to observe you in key situations and give you feedback; gather feedback through a behavioral survey that is designed for your specific needs; ask someone to conduct brief interviews with your colleagues and feedback the critical points to you; use video and record yourself for analysis.

Step 2:

Identify the key leverage points for development. Behavioral development takes commitment and practice. You do not want to waste your time working in areas that could be developed but are not critical to your success as a leader.

Step 3:

Explore the thinking that sits beneath your behavior. How we think: our beliefs, assumptions, concepts, biases, etc. influences how we behave. To bring about sustainable behavioral change we often need to take a fresh look at some of our most basic assumptions and gain new insights. For most of us, it's impossible to do this alone; you need to engage the services of someone skilled in this area to challenge you and help you think things through.

Step 4:

Develop your behavioral skills. Learn how to build on your areas of strength as well as expanding your repertoire of positive behaviors by learning and practicing new skills. There are books that can help you to do this, but it is always faster and more effective to do it experientially by attending a behavioral skills workshop or by working with a coach.

Step 5:

Think strategically about your behavior and plan for important situations where it is critical that you have the impact that you want. This involves having clear objectives; knowing your audience; deciding on the

most appropriate behaviors to use; and delivering them in a way that has the impact you intend.

Closing the gap between your positive intentions and the sometimes surprising impact of your behavior isn't that difficult once you gain awareness of what's going on, why it's happening and what you can do about it. But one thing is for sure, alignment between your intention and impact is critical if you aspire to be the sort of leader who people genuinely want to follow. ■

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