Bitesize Business Breakthroughs

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Model the behaviours of high-impact people and secure a brighter future for your own business...

You'd like to think that companies such as NASA, Google, Adobe, LinkedIn and Salesforce have worked out how to recruit and develop high-impact people in their businesses.

They have.

They have worked out how to build behaviours that tackle their business challenges in a high-impact, self-driven and valuable way.

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You won't be surprised to discover that there are 3 types of 'players' in these businesses (and probably in your own business as well):

1. **HIGH-IMPACT PLAYERS:** Those who have a high-contribution, high-impact way of working and who achieve their full potential (the exceptions).
2. **TYPICAL CONTRIBUTORS:** Those who make a worthwhile contribution but who play below par, never quite hitting the expectations you have for them (the majority). These people could be more valuable to you and to your business, but you can't quite put your finger on what to do about it.
3. **UNDER-CONTRIBUTORS:** Those who consistently underperform in their roles and who probably create most of your stress, uncertainty and doubt.

Understand the subtle differences between 1 and 2 and you can create a road map towards high-impact ways of working for yourself and for the majority of your team. Ignore these differences and you'll forever fail to tap into your team's full potential.

By clarifying the behaviours you're looking for, you can nurture, recognise and reward high-impact people and build greater business success.

Where's the payoff?

In interviews, managers of large organisations such as NASA and Google suggest that high-impact players deliver more than 3 times the value delivered by their typical contributor colleagues and more than 10 times the value of the under-contributors.

IN A NUTSHELL:

When you encourage and nurture the mindset and behaviours of high-impact players in your team, your people will achieve more and deliver greater value to your business.

Make it personal...

Could YOU be making a higher impact on your business?

In simple terms, it's about adopting the thinking patterns and behaviours of the proven high-impact players and building high-impact habits around 5 specific practices and 2 core competencies.

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Over 170 manager interviews across 9 high-profile, world-class businesses, as well as 350 surveys across 9 countries, have helped identify the 5 mindset practices and behaviours of high-impact players.

Why not start by modelling the thinking and the behaviours of high-impact players and earn the credibility to help others do the same? By working on the 5 practices of high-impact players yourself, you set the standard for high impact across your business.

5 challenging issues...

Liz Wiseman's research, outlined in her brilliant book, Impact Players, points to the way people react to 5 common business challenges. It's more than likely you can give a real-life example of each of these challenges from your own business:

1. **A messy problem**
2. **Unclear roles**
3. **Unforeseen challenges**
4. **Moving goals**
5. **Unrelenting workload**

The way you respond to each of these 5 challenges indicates whether you're in a *high-impact, typical contributor* or *under-contributor* state.

5 behaviours of high-impact players:

The research suggests you focus on 2 core competencies. But you need to consider the 5 high-impact behaviours to understand just how vital these competencies are.

Here are 5 questions based on Wiseman's 5 practices. You can assess your own impact status from your answers. Check out the downloadable tools for a measurable way of assessing yourself against all 5:

1. Do you see a ***messy problem*** as a distraction from doing the job or as a chance to be useful doing the job that really needs doing? DO THE JOB THAT'S NEEDED
2. If ***roles and responsibilities are unclear***, do you wait for direction or do you see an opportunity to lead? STEP UP AND LEAD
3. When ***unforeseen challenges*** show up, do you see more hassle or do you see a chance to finish the job in a better way? FINISH STRONG
4. If the goal feels like a ***moving target***, do you stick to what you know best or do you see a reason to build new capabilities, behaviours and habits? ASK AND ADJUST
5. When the ***work seems unrelenting***, do you ask for help or do you look for a way to work together to lighten the load for everyone? MAKE WORK FEEL LIGHTER

STOP trying to act on too many things or too many practices at one time

START focusing on the 2 core competencies

The 2 core competencies

Because changes in behaviour have cascading effects on team dynamics, Wiseman's research shows that we can focus on just 2 core competencies. These 2 competencies will have a compounding impact on both productivity and morale (check out the valuable video on 'trophic cascades' in the tools).

Wiseman calls these 2 the 'master skills'.

> *"Just as physical competencies such as speed and hand-eye coordination are foundational in a wide variety of sports, the master skills are foundational for all Impact Player practices."*
> – Liz Wiseman, *Impact Players – how to take the lead , play bigger, and multiply your impact*

1. Who do you serve?

Wiseman challenges our perceptions when it comes to tackling problems. She suggests that most action-oriented professionals, when faced with a problem, assess the situation, take charge and act swiftly.

But it's easy to hit the wrong target.

Too many professionals are stuck in their own heads, doing what they always do in the same way. They fail to see beyond their own perspective. Their intention is positive, but they may be looking through the wrong point of view – their own!

Wiseman astutely says:

> *"When vision is limited, so is impact. To increase our impact we must know what is valuable to others."*

David Marquet turned the worst-performing nuclear submarine in the

US Navy, the Santa Fe, into the best in just months, without having ever commanded a submarine previously. Because he worked out how to get his people, ALL of his people, to improve their methods of thinking, they succeeded. And long after he left the post as commander, 10 of his team went on to become submarine commanders and 6 achieved much higher ranks. He understandably suggests that:

"...excellence is achieved when people are thinking."
– David Marquet

Marquet's experience also shows that, when a team consider multiple perspectives, their decision-making improves and they take more impactful action.

Change your perspective and you'll see the real needs and priorities. You'll then do the job that's needed (behaviour 1), step up and then step back at the right time (2) and make work feel light because you see the value for others (5).

One of the skills and habits supporting this approach is to **change seats**, as multi-billion-dollar tech company Intuit have done with their 'follow me home' programme. By literally sitting next to customers in their homes, they get to see what the customer sees. A second skill is to simply **listen longer** and to be more curious and committed to understanding what people are feeling.

Change your perspective:

"In what way would your work improve if you held back and listened more? Could you increase your impact simply by changing seats, getting a new perspective and staying curious a little longer?"
– Liz Wiseman, *Impact Players*

2. How full is your glass?

The adage about thinking that a glass is half-full (rather than half-empty) might be as old as the hills, but Wiseman's research shows that to make a meaningful impact you must see the 5 challenges through rose-tinted (opportunity) glasses.

Have another look at the 5 questions above and see how high-impact people see an opportunity in every one of the difficulties, and how the typical contributors often see the difficulties as threats.

Choosing an opportunity-driven mindset triggers behaviours that help a person make the most of each circumstance.

"When we change our lens from threat to opportunity we can turn risky situations into rewarding experiences."
– Liz Wiseman, *Impact Players*

Changing our perspective from 'threat' to opportunity allows us to see more clearly and take the high-impact path.

The high-impact players in Wiseman's research **apply 4 skills and habits** to support and nurture an opportunity-based, rather than a threat-based, view.

Just as high-impact players do, you can use these 4 steps to help you reframe threats as opportunities:

1. **Recognise ambiguity.** Use any situation fraught with uncertainty and difficulty (the 5 challenging issues noted above) to trigger or signal that it's time to pause and check the lens you are using. Is this particular situation a threat or an opportunity?
2. **Check for signs** that you are looking at the situation through a threat lens by considering a few of Wiseman's challenging questions:
   - Am I concerned primarily with the downside risks rather than the upside possibilities?
   - Am I pulling inward rather than looking outward?

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4 helping hands for you...

With a little thinking and planning, you can avoid the *curse of knowledge* (a cognitive bias that occurs when individuals who are knowledgeable about a particular subject find it difficult to imagine or understand the perspective of someone with less knowledge or expertise in that area). You can get your message and your important numbers over to your audience in a way that has real impact, connection and emotion, ensuring that you are able to bring about the decision and action you want.

Use these 4 helping hands, whether your audience is made up of your customers, your team or your family:

1. **Work on yourself first.** When you experience the impact of seeing every difficulty as an opportunity, and when you take time out to be a bit more curious and see things from other perspectives, you can speak from experience, with confidence.
2. **Acknowledge the people who have the potential for greater impact.** When you don't know what to do to access hidden potential in people, it's easy to ignore those who could have greater impact. The 2 core competencies, 5 problems and 5 high-impact behaviours give you a framework within which to work.
3. **Share your experiences of the 2 core competencies.** Share both the successes and the difficulties of being opportunity-focused and seeing different perspectives. Seek discussion with your team so that the learning happens informally at first.
4. **Investigate and explore the 5 behaviours.** There's only so much we can cover in one of these breakthrough reports. So grab a copy of Liz Wiseman's book and add to the knowledge you now have.

Reading this report and the additional suggested resources and downloadable tools is a great first step in simplifying and bringing high-impact behaviours to life. Working on yourself is the place to start, before sharing and discussing with your people.

- Do I believe that I lack ability, power or resources rather than seeing sufficient levels of capability and resources in myself?

3. **Reframe the situation.** Ask a few more questions to trigger different answers and feelings to support your opportunity-based view:
   - How would a high-impact player see this as an opportunity to add value?
   - How can this have a positive impact on my own goals?
   - What capabilities and resources can I tap into to navigate the inherent ambiguity?
4. **Decide and act using your opportunity lens.** Ask yourself: as I look through the opportunity lens, what beliefs and behaviours naturally follow?

A PROVEN SOLUTION FOR YOU...

Employ these 2 core competencies to transform the value you deliver and to maximise impact:

1. change your perspective and see what's of value to the people and communities served by your work
2. start seeing opportunity and potential where others see threats and problems

Because difficult work situations often involve genuine peril, at least professionally, simply reframing a threat into an opportunity may not be enough. You'll need to acknowledge the risks and act in a way that reduces them.

Time to disagree:

"We already have high-performing team members, so I'm not sure this works for us."

High performance is great, of course. But this is not about high performance, it's about impact! Many people perform well in their jobs and get the work done, but they could be having a much higher and more valuable impact on their team or business. Sometimes there is something that holds back smart, capable people who are capable of greater impact. When taken seriously, these insights can help raise the bar for your top performers as well as for the rest of your people.

"The risk of doing something different from my normal job just feels too dangerous for me to step up."

When it comes to making an impact, there are many things that can affect the associated risks. And so it pays to look into a high-risk and dangerous environment for inspiration. Rather than simply acting without permission or authorisation, you might try what David Maquet did on his nuclear submarine. Before acting, his people used the phrase *"I intend to..."* to signpost what they were about to do and to give an opportunity for guidance and input from a manager. For more insights on risk management, check out Liz Wiseman's book.

ULTIMATE ARGUMENT:

"If everyone ignored their job and did what they thought best we'd have chaos across the business."

It's unlikely that you'd have instant take-up across your entire team on every one of the high-impact behaviours and core competencies. Everyone moves at a different pace, so you'll have the opportunity to see how some people will run with it while others will simply observe at first, providing a chance for the leaders to respond.

As with all new insights, it comes down to *"let's give it a go..."* – test it, experiment with it and see what it brings to you and your business.

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Want to know more?

Liz Wiseman's book is packed with stories and examples that bring the frameworks shared here to life. If you, and perhaps one or two of your team, 'step up' and embrace the high-impact mindset and behaviours, your business will be better and stronger for it.

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Use these tools and resources to enable you to make a high impact when it comes to the business challenges you and your team face.

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