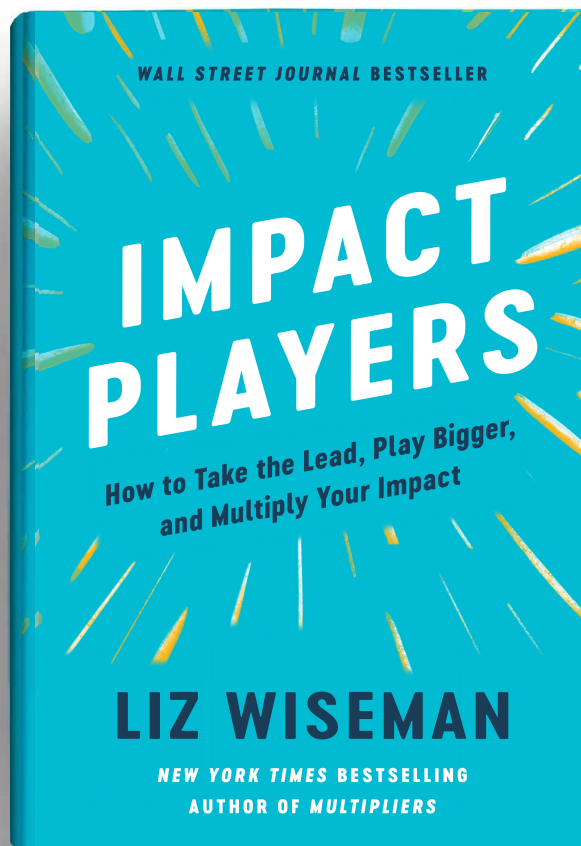


THE IMPACT PLAYERS PLAYBOOK



MULTIPLYING YOUR IMPACT

Studying leadership has taught me this truth about contributorship: people all around the world arrive at work wanting to contribute at their fullest. They want to work in an organization where intelligence and talent are maximized and where people are deeply engaged, learning rapidly, and contributing in full measure.

The underutilization of talent is avoidable—with leaders who bring out the best in others and players who bring an all-in mentality. Whereas my book *Multipliers* provides a leadership model for high engagement and utilization, *Impact Players* explores the talent side of the equation, what contributors can do to maximize their impact and what leaders can do to help all those on their team play at their full capability. The book serves as a companion to *Multipliers*, because when Contributors become Impact Players, the multiplier effect is exponential.

You, too, can be an Impact Player. These playbooks will give you data-based insights and practical tools to help you take the lead, play bigger, and multiply your impact. In each, you will find a set of Smart Plays to implement the practice wisely, create real value for others, and increase their impact.

- Liz Wiseman

IMPACT PLAYERS

PLAYBOOK

SMARTPLAYS

01 FIND THE DOUBLE W.I.N.

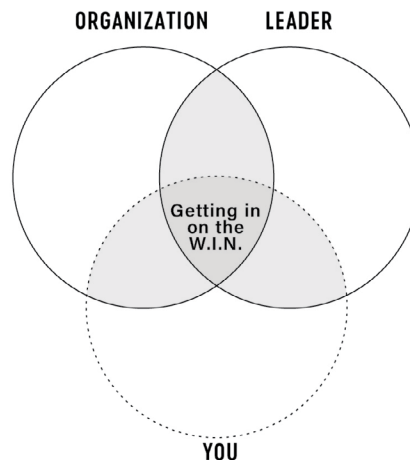
A quick way to get on the agenda is to look for a double W.I.N. (*What's Important Now*)—something important to the organization that's also important to your immediate boss (*or stakeholder*). As a general rule, if you aren't working on your boss's top three priorities, you are not working on the agenda.



<p>1. Identify what's important to your organization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the top-level strategic objects for the year? What projects receive the most visibility and funding? What does the most senior executive talk about? 	<p>2. Identify what's important to your leader(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do they spend time on or talk about? What are they emotional or passionate about? How are they measured? 	<p>3. Identify what's important to both your boss and organization that is urgent right now:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has momentum? What would get funded? What would get your client or boss promoted?
<p>Select the top three. →</p>	<p>Select the top three. →</p>	<p>This is the W.I.N.</p>

02 GET IN ON THE W.I.N.

Once you've established a double win, look for an opportunity to contribute where your capabilities overlap with the W.I.N. Maximize your impact by identifying a W.I.N. that is one of your stakeholder's top 3 priorities.



What is one of your stakeholder's top 3 priorities to which you can make a material contribution?
How does your work help solve this problem or accomplish this objective?

IMPACT PLAYERS

PLAYBOOK

SMARTPLAYS (CONT.)

03 TALK UP THE AGENDA.

Make the connection between your stakeholder's agenda and the work you are doing right now. Let them know that you are the *HOW* to their *WHAT*. Craft a short statement that captures how your work helps them achieve the priorities on their agenda. For example, *"I'm aware that increasing customer retention is our top priority, and I'm creating profiles of our various customer types so we can better understand their requirements."* A great statement will communicate two messages: 1) *"I get you,"* meaning, I understand what is important to you, and 2) *"I've got you covered,"* meaning, I am making this happen. Begin your interactions, such as email messages, presentations, and one-on-one meetings, with one of these statements so your stakeholders know that what is important to them is important to you.

ARE YOU WORKING ON THE AGENDA?

Signs you are on the agenda:

People have time for you, calendars open up, and meetings get scheduled quickly.

Resources become available. Funds typically flow to the most important work.

Work gets easier. As support for the work increases, progress comes faster and more efficiently.

There's more pressure. Because the work matters, expect to feel more weight on your shoulders and greater pressure to perform.

There's more visibility. When your sights are set on what's important, all eyes are on you.

Signs you are off the agenda:

No time. Meetings are hard to schedule. You hurry up and then wait because people don't have time to meet with you. One-on-ones with your boss are canceled.

No response. You send emails but don't receive replies.

No feedback. When you ask people to review your documents, you get little feedback or receive a cursory response such as "Looks good."

Stalls and delays. Initiatives get stalled and then scrapped. Or progress comes so slowly that the needs change before the work is complete.

Not on the boss's short list Your boss isn't asking you about your work.

04 PRACTICE "THE NAIVE YES."

Dealing with messy problems often requires working outside our comfort zone and beyond our current capabilities. Being underqualified can feel intimidating or overwhelming, and it is easy to say no to the added uncertainty and just do your current job. Try practicing "the naive yes" by agreeing to a new challenge before your brain kicks in and tells you it's not possible, or as Richard Branson said, "If somebody offers you

an amazing opportunity but you are not sure you can do it, say yes— then learn how to do it later!" Once you've said yes, learn quickly by admitting what you don't know and asking intelligent, informed questions. Project the image of "intelligent learner"—someone with high self-confidence but low situational confidence. This lets your stakeholders know that you are in rookie mode but are capable of learning

IMPACT PLAYERS

PLAYBOOK

SAFETY TIPS

01 TAKE OUT A PERMIT.

While venturing out to address messy problems, you don't want to be forgotten by others. And if something goes awry, you want people to know where you are and why you left your post. Like a hiker who checks in with the authorities and indicates their destination before venturing into dangerous backcountry alone, you should obtain a permit. Agree with your manager about (1) where you are headed and why and (2) what parts of your core job you need to continue to do well.

02 STAY CONNECTED AND DROP PINS.

A leader's agenda can change as quickly as backcountry weather. When working in the white space between formal organizations, check-in frequently with your team and your boss. Once you venture out, occasionally "drop a pin," much like a hiker using a satellite tracker to alert others to their current position. Don't just update others on your work; find out how their priorities are shifting so you can stay on the agenda.

03 MAINTAIN SOME DISTANCE.

Having empathy for one's leaders and staying aligned with the priorities of the organization are sound practices. However, taken to their extreme, such practices can lead to blind followership and become extremely dangerous. History is replete with examples of faithful followers who failed to question unethical orders and crimes committed by victims who sympathized with their captors. As you serve, be mindful to maintain the psychological distance and independent thought needed to question the wisdom and ethics of any directive. In addition to the other ethics criteria, you might ask yourself: "Will I regret doing this when I'm no longer working for this person or organization?"

IMPACT PLAYERS

PLAYBOOK

SMARTPLAYS

01 LISTEN FOR WHITE NOISE.

Listen for ambient problems—low-grade, persistent problems where the organization can make marked improvements with a little bit of leadership and focus. What is everyone complaining about but not doing anything about? Where are there seemingly small inefficiencies that are repeated and add up to a large waste

over time? What problems have staff members become numb to that might be shockingly obvious to a new customer or a newcomer on staff? Do the calculations, create transparency, and build a makeshift team that can fix it once and enjoy the benefits over time.

02 FILL A VACUUM.

Look for situations that lack clear leadership. Don't wait for a transformational moment or a chance to change the course of history; provide leadership in everyday moments, including these two all-too-common leadership vacuums:

- **Unclear meetings.** It is estimated that 63 percent of meetings have no planned agenda. You can provide much-needed clarity by suggesting the group agree on intended outcomes for the meeting. This can be done by asking, "What is the most important thing for us to accomplish during this meeting?"

- **Unsung heroes.** Most employees express a need to be recognized by their boss, peers, and clients; however, according to a Glassdoor survey, only two-thirds of employees said that their bosses showed them enough appreciation. You can fill this leadership void by speaking up to recognize the contributions of your peers or collaborators, especially those who work behind the scenes. Elevating the contributions of others gets them the credit they deserve and engenders the trust you need to lead without authority.

03 INVITE YOURSELF TO THE PARTY.

To step up and take the lead, sometimes you'll have to invite yourself into the room where things are happening. But don't be a creepy interloper who appears without warning, takes up a seat without contributing, or hijacks the agenda. Rather, let the meeting organizer know why you'd like to be included and what

value you offer. Once there, make a meaningful contribution to the agenda at hand and conduct yourself so you are sure to get an invite next time. Last, if you plan to arrive uninvited, be sure you have at least one strong, credible supporter in the room.

IMPACT PLAYERS

PLAYBOOK

SMARTPLAYS (CONT.)

04 ACT THE PART.

An easy step to becoming a leader is to start acting like one right now. As Amy Gallo of Harvard Business Review wrote, “If you want to become a leader, don’t wait for the fancy title or the corner office. You can begin to act, think, and communicate like a leader long before that promotion.” When you act the part, demonstrating the characteristics and attitudes needed to lead, you increase your chances of being cast into the role later. Emulate the positive leadership

qualities you see demonstrated by the leaders one and two levels above you. Get started by picking a leadership trait from any of these sources and start practicing it: (1) one of your boss’s best leadership qualities (e.g., asking good questions), (2) a positive characteristic of someone who was recently promoted into a managerial role (e.g., innovative thinking), (3) one of your organization’s stated leadership or cultural values (e.g., collaboration).

05 PASS THE BATON.

To build leadership credibility, show your colleagues that you can follow as well as you lead. Perhaps you’ve been holding onto a leadership role too long and should pass the baton to a new leader. Is there a project or initiative that you’ve successfully led that would benefit from “fresh legs” or “new eyes?” Is there a colleague or team member who is capable of stepping

up and leading the work during the next phase? As you make the handoff, don’t just transfer the work, transfer authority. Go further by letting the rest of the team know that this person, rather than you, is now in charge. Lastly, quickly find an opportunity to visibly support their leadership.

SAFETY TIPS

01 SHARE THREE THINGS.

To avoid stepping on toes, let your peers and colleagues know that although you are stepping up to lead, you come in peace. Build trust by sharing three essentials: (1) share your intent: let people know what you are trying to accomplish and how it will benefit others; (2) share power: create opportunities for others to lead pieces of the work, or let them know the leadership role will rotate; (3) share the spotlight: make heroes of the people you are leading. When others win, too, people will follow.

02 COVER YOUR BASES.

Though you may not wait for management approval before taking charge of a situation, you do want to keep your management informed. Before chasing after a discretionary project, ensure your boss knows you've got the bases covered on your core job. Check-in regularly to let them know what you are working on and how it's going. Additionally, "inviting yourself in" doesn't mean you should surprise a meeting leader with your presence; rather, check with them first and suggest how your attendance can benefit the outcome.

03 PICK YOUR BATTLES.

In stepping up to lead, avoid overcommitting. As with community volunteerism, overzealousness can dilute one's impact and lead to burnout and disillusionment. Take charge selectively, saving your strength for battles in which momentum and organizational support are on your side. When you choose your causes wisely, you will be viewed as a leader, not a rabble-rouser.

IMPACT PLAYERS

PLAYBOOK

SMARTPLAYS

01 DRAFT A STATEMENT OF WORK (SOW).

It's easier to finish a job well and completely when you've started with a clear remit. But you don't need to wait for your boss or client to provide clear direction; you can define the Statement of Work yourself. Create a shared vision of the work by documenting: (1) the performance standard: what a great job looks like; (2) the finish line: what a complete job looks like; (3) the boundaries: what's not part of the job.

Start by capturing what you've already heard, then use your judgment to fill in what's missing. Lastly, review this with stakeholders to add anything they think is missing and to confirm mutual expectations. You might say, "Here is what I think success looks like. Where am I off?" Once you have agreement, you have a clear Statement of Work and can take ownership for its successful completion.

02 NEGOTIATE THE NECES- SITIES.

Be clear about what you need to be successful, such as information, time, access, guidance, and resources. Be sure to negotiate this support at the outset of the work, before you'll need it. You don't need a formal negotiation, just a mutual understanding. Try a simple "if/then" statement, such as: "If I am to be able to do [this thing you need from

me] then I will need you to do [this thing I'll need to be successful]." By using if/then logic, you accomplish two important objectives: (1) reminding your stakeholder what you stand ready to deliver and (2) making them aware of what you need to deliver successfully.

IMPACT PLAYERS

PLAYBOOK

SMARTPLAYS (CONT.)

03 REFRAME OBSTACLES AS CHALLENGES.

The way we characterize a situation changes how we respond. When we view unexpected obstacles as problems, solutions elude us. After all, problems, by definition, lack solutions. When we reframe obstacles as challenges, we engage our mental faculties and become energized for the contest. To reframe obstacles as challenges, start by assuming every

workday or project (or boss!) will be full of obstacles, so you aren't surprised when they surface. And when they do, reframe them as (1) an intellectual puzzle begging for a solution, (2) a character test requiring patience or humility, or (3) a physical challenge requiring pacing and endurance.

04 ADD A SURPRISE.

When you complete a project or another piece of work, do something a little extra, above and beyond the original request or remit. Doing something extra doesn't need to involve a Herculean effort. It could be as simple as highlighting the key points when you forward a report to your

manager. The best surprises will be (1) something unexpected, (2) something that supports their agenda (see chapter 2), and (3) something that doesn't distract you from other mission-critical work. Ask yourself: What's a small extra they aren't expecting but would be delighted by?

IMPACT PLAYERS

PLAYBOOK

SAFETY TIPS

01

KNOW WHEN TO LET GO.

If you suspect you are working on yesterday's priorities, engaged in an unwinnable battle, or headed for a Pyrrhic victory, ask yourself: (1) Is this still relevant, given changes in the larger environment or market? (2) Is this still important to the organization and my leadership? Is this on the agenda (see chapter 2)? (3) Is this something we can still be successful at, even if we finish strong? If the answers are no, it might be time to let it go. But don't abandon the work without getting clearance from your leader(s) or stakeholders, and be sure to let them know what you will do instead to stay on the agenda—or let them direct you as you pivot to a higher-priority project.

02

VENT WITH INTENT.

It's perfectly reasonable to want to share your frustrations with your manager. And it's healthy for managers to acknowledge the challenges their team members face. But there's a proper way to whinge and moan: keep it infrequent, brief, and focused. If you need to let off some steam, vent a little, but don't release ownership. Let your leaders know what actions you are already taking and be clear whether you are looking for sympathy or solutions.

IMPACT PLAYERS

PLAYBOOK

SMARTPLAYS

01 ASK FOR GUIDANCE, NOT FEEDBACK.

Because feedback is associated with evaluation rather than improvement, people tend to get better feedback in both quantity and quality when they ask for advice or guidance rather than feedback. Instead of asking people for feedback on your performance, ask for information and insights that will help you

do the task well. Use questions such as: *“If I want to do X really well, what advice do you have for me?”* *“What insights do you have that would help me do a better job next time I do X?”* *“What should I do more of?”* *“What should I do less of?”* *“If I did just one thing differently next time, what would you suggest?”*

02 WALK IT OFF.

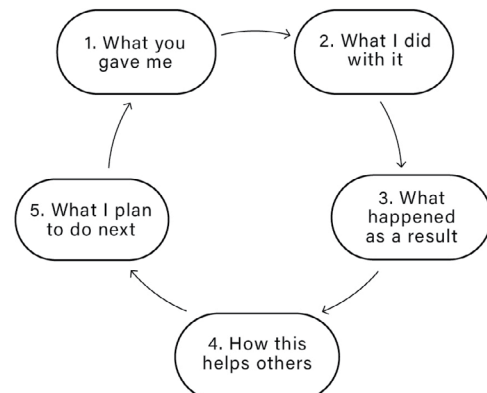
Even for the most confident learners, feedback can still hurt and inflict injury on our ego. Much like an athlete, we can shake off the sting of a minor injury by walking it off. The following tactics can help you create some space between receiving and responding to feedback and will help prevent overreaction.

- **Take a reset walk.** Literally, walk it off and clear your head.
- **Talk it out.** Talk through what you hear with a friend or colleague before responding.

- **Assume positive intent.** Consider the best intentions of the person giving you feedback. Assume that they are on your side and are helping you improve your work.
- **Regroup.** Ask for time to process the guidance you’ve received and come back with a plan. Be sure to show appreciation for the feedback.
- **Be authentic.** Admit that your initial reaction is to feel defensive. Let them know that you intend to understand and act on their in-sight and will process it as soon as your amygdala calms down and you can lower your defenses.

03 CIRCLE BACK.

Don’t leave people wondering what you did with the feedback or guidance that they gave you. Show its full effect and give an account of what you’ve done with their investment in you. You can close the loop by saying: (1) This is the guidance you gave me, (2) This is how I acted upon it, (3) This is what ensued, (4) This is how this experience benefited me and others, and (5) This is what I plan to do next.



IMPACT PLAYERS

PLAYBOOK

SAFETY TIPS

01

HELP OTHERS SPEAK UP.

People at all levels can feel uncomfortable offering someone else corrective guidance. Try making it safe for others in these ways.

- **Invite.** Let them know that to hit the mark, you need to know where you might be missing the mark.
- **React.** Don't get defensive, don't make excuses, don't retaliate. Just listen and ask clarifying questions.
- **Respond.** Thank people for their insight and let them know how it will help you hit the mark.

02

PUBLICIZE YOUR PROGRESS.

For starters, let people know what you've done as a result of their individual feedback. Take it further by making your general learning a matter of public record. Let your colleagues know (1) what you are hearing from internal or external customers, (2) what insights you've gleaned, and (3) what adjustments you are making based on those insights.

IMPACT PLAYERS

PLAYBOOK

SMARTPLAYS

01 GET TO THE POINT.

People who are easy to work with are usually easy to understand. They get to the point and express their ideas clearly. If you want to sharpen your point, try any of these techniques:

- Write your point out as if it were a 140-character tweet.
- Add an executive summary to your written reports or oral briefings. This could be a paragraph with the key points or just a single sentence with the conclusion. When delivering

your report, start with the executive summary and then add detail as needed.

- When forwarding a long email chain to a leader (or any other colleague), provide a summary of the idea exchange included in the email chain. Then add your question or request.
- Score a three-pointer by summarizing your thoughts (or a larger conversation) in three clear points.

02 PLAY YOUR CHIPS WISELY.

Before an important meeting, give yourself a budget of “poker chips,” where each chip represents a comment or contribution to the meeting and is worth a specific number of seconds of talking time. Use your chips sparingly, weighing in when you have an insight that is:

- **Relevant.** Is this issue immediately relevant to your boss or stakeholder? If it isn't on the specific agenda for the meeting, is it something that is on their broader agenda (one of their top three priorities)?
- **Evidence-based.** Is the insight based on data or other evidence? Are you presenting a balanced point of view with data that also tells the other side of the story?

- **Unique.** Is your point additive to what has already been said, or is it just restating a point that has already been made? Do the ideas or insights reflect your unique role, perspective, or skills?
- **Succinct.** Is your point concise and clear? Some people may need to play their chips more sparingly, while others may need to dispense their ideas more liberally. Either way, a chip—whether a physical chip in your pocket or an image held in your mind—serves as a talisman, reminding you to contribute intentionally and valuably.

IMPACT PLAYERS

PLAYBOOK

SMARTPLAYS (CONT.)

03 DISCOVER YOUR NATIVE GENIUS.

If you aren't clear about what your native genius is, you can get a rapid 360-degree perspective by sending an email or text to six friends or colleagues. Make it easy for them to respond by using this template:

Hi. I would appreciate your input. I'm trying to better understand how I can use my "native genius" at work, meaning what I do naturally, easily, and freely. From your perspective, what do you see as my natural genius? If you need a prompt, here are a

few questions to get you thinking:

- What do I do better than anything else I do?
- What do I do without effort?
- What do I do without being asked?
- What do I tend to do better than people around me?

Thank you. Your input will help me understand how to contribute at my fullest.

04 CREATE A USER'S GUIDE TO YOU.

If you feel as though you are being used like a hammer when you're actually a Swiss Army knife, you might need to let your team know how best to use you. Create a User's Guide to You that includes: (1) Native genius: What does your mind do easily and freely? (2) Uses: What are various ways your native

genius could be applied at work? (3) Instructions and care: What type of information, feedback, and support do you need from others to do your best work? (4) Warnings: Where do you tend to get stuck or derailed, and how can people help you stay on track?

IMPACT PLAYERS

PLAYBOOK

SAFETY TIPS

01

COMMUNICATE YOUR NATIVE GENIUS.

When communicating your native genius, remember to:

- **Clarify your intent.** Explain what is meant by “native genius”— it’s people’s natural brilliance or gift, what they do easily and freely and extremely well. Let people know that you really enjoy and excel at work that draws on your native genius and that you are eager to use it to contribute in more significant ways.
- **Don’t be a prima donna.** Don’t demand to work only within your native genius. Just because you have identified your native genius, doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t have to work in areas that you aren’t naturally good at or particularly interested in.
- **Give it time.** When asking someone to consider additional ways to utilize your native genius, give them time to think. Try to break up the conversation into several steps: (1) share your intent, (2) discuss your native genius, (3) discuss new applications for your talents.
- **Make it a two-way street.** In addition to discussing your native genius, take the opportunity to recognize and be interested in the native genius of others on your team, including your boss.

02

PREVENT OVEREXPOSURE.

Most everybody wants to be treated as a whole person, not just an employee; however, everyone has a different comfort level with mingling work and personal life. If you are someone who is comfortable talking about your personal life, use these safety measures: (1) share only what you would be willing to share publicly, (2) share but never inquire (this allows others to reciprocate voluntarily), (3) continue only if your sharing is appreciated and reciprocated. If a colleague doesn’t reciprocate, it might be a sign of an unwelcome gift.

IMPACT PLAYERS

PLAYBOOK

SAFETY TIPS (CONT.)

03

ENSURE YOUR HELP IS HELPFUL.

You don't want to be the party guest who arrives early and offers to help with last-minute preparations but requires so much instruction, attention, and validation that you become an encumbrance or nuisance. Try these three tips to ensure your offers to help are a blessing, not a burden: (1) Instead of asking, "What can I do to help?" ask, "Would it be helpful if I did [this thing] for you?" (2) Instead of asking, "How do you want me to do it?" ask, "Are there any specific requirements I should know about, or should I just use my judgment?" (3) Let the person know what you did and to tell you if they want you to do it differently.