The Intention-Impact Gap

Understanding the space between what you mean and what people experience — Chapter 2

Every action you take as a leader begins with an intention. That intention gets encoded into behavior. That behavior is then decoded by the people on the receiving end, filtered through their own experiences, history, assumptions, and context. What lands as your impact may look very different from what you intended.



The Gap Lives In Two Places

- **Encoding:** How you translate your intention into behavior. You may believe you are being clear, but clarity is not determined by the sender — it is determined by the receiver.
- **Decoding:** How the other person interprets your behavior, shaped by their own experiences, history, assumptions, the organizational climate, and even how tired or stressed they are.

Mind the Gap

Minding the gap means staying genuinely curious about the space between what you meant and what landed. Not assuming the two are the same. Not concluding that because your intention was good, your impact must have been too. 360-degree feedback gives you information about what is happening inside that gap.

> ***Key insight:*** *Feedback does not exist to evaluate your intentions. It exists to describe how your leadership was experienced. Impact is not an accusation. It is information.*