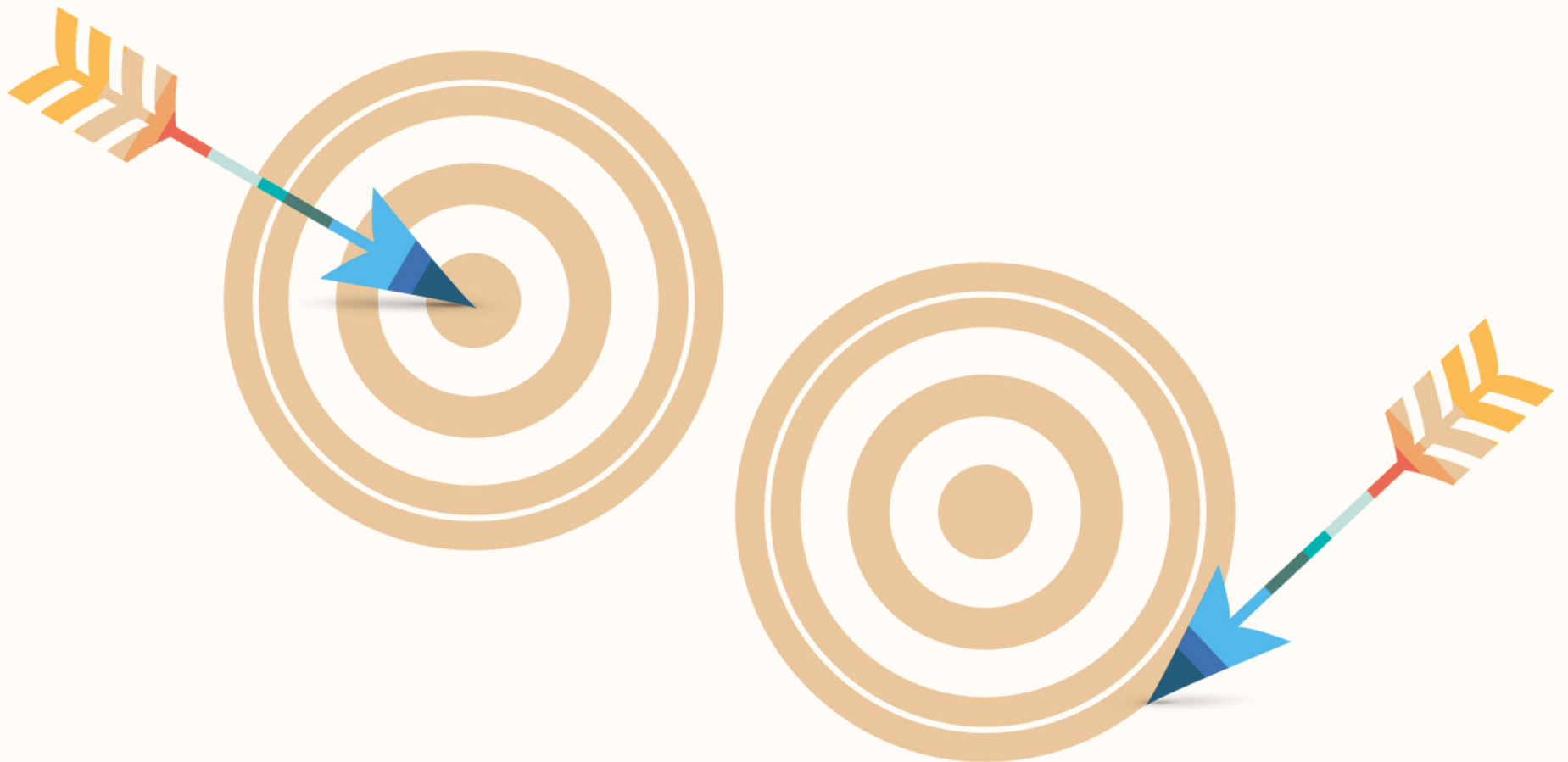


Wednesday

WeBelong Monthly:



Intent vs. Impact



Intent vs. Impact: The Importance

Intent:

What you want to achieve through an action, words, or behaviors

Impact:

How a person or community receives the action, words, or behaviors

These don't have to exist in opposition to each other. Our main goal is to bridge the gap (where there is one) between our intent and our impact.

Why does our impact matter more than our intent?

There are a lot of reasons that can largely be grouped into three buckets: **morally**, from a place of **inclusion/belonging**, and at work, for **compliance**.

Morally

We don't want to be the source of pain or suffering for others or to be seen as "bad" people. This can be one of the biggest barriers to bridging the gap between intent and impact.

Compliance

Unaddressed and unchecked comments and actions can potentially lead to claims of harassment, discrimination, and/or a hostile work environment.

Why does our impact matter more than our intent?

Inclusion/Belonging

Failing to focus on impact can:

- Prevent people from participating in activities or contributing to meetings
- Increase feelings of exclusion or being othered in certain groups, even if the behaviors are unrelated
- Shut down brilliant ideas before they can emerge
- Result in turnover

What Should I Do?

If you've caused harm to someone in your workplace (or elsewhere), there are several important steps you should take to address the situation:

- Acknowledge the impact, regardless of positive intent
- Educate yourself
- Reflect on your own biases
- Avoid becoming defensive
- Make a plan to do better

What Should I Do?

When someone causes harm, you can choose to call them out or to call them in.

Calling In:

- Take a moment to process what you've just heard or witnessed.
- Decide whether or not it's safe to call someone into a private discussion.
- Describe the impact of their actions or words, and explain why they were problematic.
- Offer alternative perspectives or information that can help the person understand the situation more fully.

What Should I Do?

Calling Out:

- Take a moment to process what you've just heard or witnessed.
- Be clear and direct about the behavior or comment that is problematic.
- Explain why the behavior or comment is harmful and how it perpetuates oppression or discrimination.
- Offer suggestions for how the person can do better in the future.
- Hold the person accountable for their actions, but also provide opportunities for them to make amends or learn from their mistakes.

Best Practices

Focus on Impact, Not Intent

- Prioritize the impact your words and actions have rather than your own intentions.
- Understand the difference between good intentions and harmful impact.

Respect Where People Are Coming From

- No two people will react the same to information based on their diverse backgrounds that have led to this moment.
- Give space if that's what the person is asking for or needs.

Call to Action

Be Accountable for Your Impact

- When you do something that hurts someone, take ownership.
- Avoid saying things like I didn't mean it like that, you're being too sensitive, calm down, etc.
- Listen to the person, try to understand how your words or actions made them feel, and apologize.

Respect Where People Are Coming From

- Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes.
- Don't try to put a wall up and end the conversation.
- Remember everyone will make mistakes, including you and the best thing you can do is learn and do better next time.