The Invisible Leader Discussion Guide

The Invisible Leader is a great book for group discussions in companies, organizations, and universities. The below is a discussion guide for each section of the book. These should be used in conjunction with the exercises at the end of each chapter.

Introduction and Chapter 1

1. What is your initial reaction when someone asks you "why?" Reflecting on the introduction, what do you think contributes to that reaction?

2. Reflect on the quote at the beginning of Chapter 1, when in your life or work have you seen that true for you?

3. Why does the author call purpose "the invisible leader"? What are your reactions to this terminology?

4. On p. 22, the author presents four "types" of purpose. Which type of purpose is most prevalent for you or your organization?

5. When have you noticed "default" purpose (p. 23) at work in your life or work? How might you guard against it?

6. What is the difference between results and purpose? When have you seen this confused?

Chapter 2

1. When have you experienced a time where you "died by results"? What contributed to a culture or the life situation being results-obsessed?

2. How would you answer the "lottery question" that the researchers posed on p. 43? Why?

3. What does the author mean by "purpose pulls" and "results push" (p. 46)? How have you seen this play out in your life or work organization?

4. Describe a time in your life or work when you were motivated by a goal or result. How did it feel? Describe a time in your life and work when you were motivated by a bigger other-centered reason or purpose? How did it feel?

5. Do you think everyone has purpose by default? Why or why not?

Chapter 3

1. When have you seen "invisible leadership" at play? What about the environment or the people created that culture?

2. When was the first time in your life you "learned" what or who a leader was? Describe it in detail. How has that moment influenced your theory of leadership? What are the limitations?

3. Which of the dominant theories of leadership on p. 61 do you see most prominent in your work, organization, or schooling? Why might that be? What are the effects of it?

Chapter 4

1. Describe a situation you've been in here (or in life) where you felt like you mattered. Who was around? What was happening? What can you learn from that experience that you can apply to your work with others?

2. Do you agree with the author's statement, "you can't not matter?" (p.75) Why or why not?

3. How might you build an awareness of impact into your everyday life or work – or if you supervise people, in their work?

4. Which of the five ways to create a culture of significance (p. 82) do you feel needs the most attention in your organization, schooling, or life?

Chapter 5

1. What human problem do you feel you exist to help solve either in your life, work, or school?

2. Do you feel that you exhibit empathy on a regular basis? If not, how might you develop empathy? If so, how did you "learn" empathy?

Chapter 6

1. Think about a time when you were doing something and the purpose was clear. How did the purpose become clear?

2. Look at an existing mission statement (or vision statement) of an organization that you are a part of. Using the elements of an effective purpose statement on p. 116, why might the statement not be compelling? Or, if it is, why is it compelling?

3. Outside of what you do, how you do it, or what you get for what you do, why does what you're doing (job, schooling, etc.) exist?

4. Introduce yourself by reading your purpose statement. How did it feel to hear others' statements?

Chapter 7

1. When it comes to purpose, what does the author say is the difference between knowledge and belief? What is an example in your own life and work of this distinction?

2. Describe a time when you *believed* in something. What were the specific elements of the environment that upheld this belief?

3. Using the Southwest case on p. 128-129, relate a similar example where external pressures may have caused you to go off course from your purpose. What lessons did you learn from relating that experience to Chapter 7's content?

Chapter 8

1. Reflecting on the Wells Fargo case, what were some of the key elements that caused their "why" to go fuzzy? What are the risks for that in your life or organization?

2. What is a current ethical decision you are grappling with now that may cause your purpose to be misaligned? How might you use the key questions for purpose alignment on p. 147 to work through it?

3. Review the four symptoms of purpose misalignment. Which, if any, can you identify in your organization or life? What might you do about it?

Chapter 9

1. Think of a leader who successfully designed a "meaningful" culture? What did they do? How did people act?

2. When you reflect on the key elements of a meaningful environment (p. 158), which do you feel your organization is strong in and which have opportunities for growth?

Chapter 10

1. In your organization or job, how have you "de-humanized" stakeholders or customers? What processes or policies are in place that enable this? What are the implications?

2. Do you think others can know and feel your purpose? Why or why not? What are the barriers?

3. Complete the exercise at the end of Chapter 10, how might you maintain accountability of the actions or "expressions" of purpose you identified?

Chapter 11

1. The author indicated that this type of purpose work can be daunting. How are you feeling as we come to the end of the book?

2. Which of the four key "places to start" on p. 186 do you most want to work on? Why?

3. Overall, what were your impressions of the book? What parts stood out to you that you find yourself thinking about? What more would you like to discuss more?

Got a question for Zach?

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