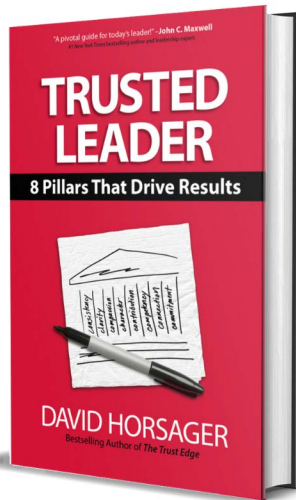


# TRUSTED LEADER

## Group Discussion Guide



WHILE READING IS MOST OFTEN a solitary and individual activity, learning can be a collaborative endeavor. This discussion guide is meant to walk you through the book, learning and reflecting as you go. Whether you are reading it alone or as part of a mastermind group or a business book club, the following questions are meant to facilitate a deeper engagement with this material. Groups can read the whole book at once, or they can schedule a series of several meetings and assign the segments identified in this discussion guide.

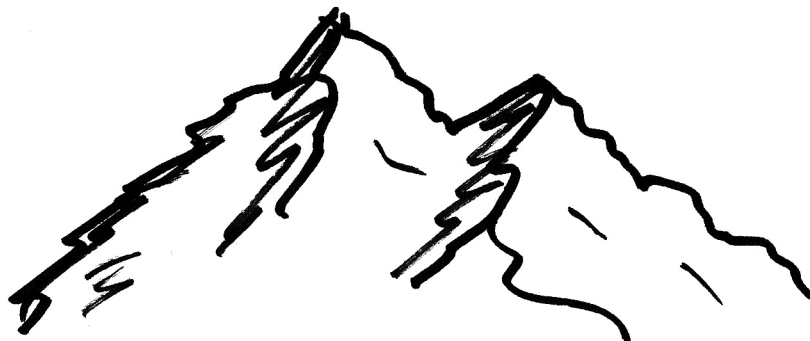
Business fables are a powerful way to learn new concepts because they allow the reader to inhabit the mind of a character and learn along with them. As you read this book, think about whether or not you relate to the characters. Do you relate to Ethan Parker? Sunny Bonaventure? Milo? What would you have done in Ethan's situation? Most importantly, how is what Ethan is learning expanding your own understanding of trust?

### Tips for Leading *Trusted Leader* Groups

- ☐ Send a detailed agenda 24 hours prior to the meeting.
- ☐ Practice names of participants.
- ☐ Be prepared to begin the session with a short introduction of attendees to help build connections.
- ☐ Remove distractions. Avoid multi-tasking during a meeting.
- ☐ Start on time.
- ☐ Be energetic. Use positive reinforcement, smiles, and acknowledgment.
- ☐ Allow pauses for thinking or working if needed.
- ☐ Plan time management during discussion time.
- ☐ Be respectful and adhere to the designated meeting end time.

### Role of Facilitators

- ★ Ask good questions.
- ★ Help members participate.
- ★ Model giving feedback.
- ★ Keep discussion on track.



# THE STORY

## Chapters 1-5

### The Setup

*We meet the protagonist, Ethan Parker, in the middle of his eureka moment. He's just learned a huge lesson about trust and how it works. But how did he get here? In the first five chapters, we go back in time to learn Ethan's backstory, a little about his life and relationships, and why he is seeking help from the enigmatic Sunny Bonaventure.*

1. In Chapter 2, we find out why Ethan is so grateful to be learning from Sunny. His own company, 10K Solutions has hit a major crisis. Have you faced anything similar in your career? How did you react when under this type of stress? If you haven't been tested to this degree, how do you think you would react?
2. Sunny outlines a theory about trust that is entirely new to Ethan. Was there anything there that struck you as new? What does trust mean to you right now? Do you value it as much as you should?
3. Ethan realizes that there were some warning signs at 10K that did not register with him. He didn't know his people very well anymore, and the benchmarks that were missed in the fall weren't dealt with thoroughly. Think about your current job and responsibilities. Are there any looming issues that you, like Ethan, might have missed up until now? What can you do to address these before you too have a day that makes you want to call "mayday"?

## Chapters 6-10

### A New Way of Seeing the World

*After his terrible accident, Ethan meets Sunny in The Grove's beautiful library, where she offers to teach him the mindset and methods that have made her ski lodge such a successful business. Ethan learns some early lessons about trust, the 8-Pillar Framework used at The Grove, and he makes a stumbling first attempt at putting these methods into practice.*

1. When Sunny tells Ethan that he doesn't have a communication problem, or an accountability problem, or even a leadership problem, he doesn't completely understand what she means. Before reading more of the book, think this through. How might a breakdown in trust be at the root of an accountability problem? How might it be the root of a communications problem, or a leadership problem?
2. The Clarity Pillar is most clearly demonstrated when Ethan sits in on the meeting in the Treehouse. How did the various tactics and practices that Sunny used to run the meeting encourage such clear communication? Is there anything that struck you as something you could employ in your work setting?
3. Ethan's first attempt to put what he was learning into practice (asking "How?" three times) crashed and burned. Why do you think this happened? What did Ethan miss? If you were to try this technique, what would you do differently? Will you look for a chance to ask "How? How? How?" this week?

## Chapters 11-15

# Boots on the Ground

*Ethan begins to meet with other employees at The Grove and simultaneously meets with members of his team at 10K in a series of one-on-one video calls. As he learns more about trust and the 8 Pillars, he also uncovers even more layers to the crisis at back home.*

1. When Milo tells Ethan about all the ways in which The Grove goes above and beyond to support their staff, Ethan is impressed and surprised. To many people, this might sound like an unusually high degree of support for a company to offer. What are some concrete steps your organization could take to more radically support your people?
2. One of the lessons Ethan learns is that you can only focus on three priorities at a time, and only one if you are truly in crisis. Right now, what are your three most important priorities? What about the company as a whole? What is your most important priority right now?
3. Think of a challenge you are facing at work right now. It doesn't have to be a full-blown crisis, but it should be something you are actively struggling with. Now ask yourself the two questions posed by Sunny:
  - *What can I control?* It's important to keep focused here. You only want to think about what you can control, not all the things you can't control, and definitely not the reasons why you can't control those things.
  - *What can I do right now?* The focus here should stay on "right now." You are not trying to create a comprehensive plan. All you are looking for is a single action you can take immediately.

## Chapters 16-20

# Real Change Begins

*Once Ethan starts to internalize all he is learning, all sorts of avenues open up to him. He puts the foundations in place to engineer a major comeback at 10K. Not only has he found new ways to support his employees, he also starts to see trust as the primary force in all his relationships, work and at home.*

1. Throughout the story, Ethan learns a lot about trust through reflecting on his most treasured relationships: Maya, his wife, and The Brain Trust, his lifelong friends. Are there relationships in your own life where you can more easily see the power of trust? What would it look like if you applied those learnings to your relationships at work? Likewise, have you experienced broken trust to the degree that it is hampering your ability to trust colleagues at work? Recognizing this is key, and much is out of your control, but what is one thing you could do today to move the needle on your ability to trust and be trusted?
2. Chef Lou emphasizes the importance of trust in any attempt to build equity and diversity in a community or workplace. How does this focus differ from diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings you have experienced? How can you bring this perspective to your own individual attempts to make the workplace a more equitable and comfortable place for all employees?

3. Now that you have learned a bit more about all 8 Pillars, do a quick assessment of each pillar in your own life or organization. How would you rate yourself in each one? Remember, they are Connection, Compassion, Clarity, Character, Competency, Commitment, Contribution, and Consistency.
  - What are your strongest two pillars? The weakest two?
  - What can you do to address one or both of your weakest pillars?
4. Think about your own organization. In what ways does trust affect the function of your team or organization?
5. Identify three problems you are facing at work. Next, identify the pillar of trust that has broken down in each of those problem scenarios. What is one tactic from the book that you can use to improve trust in each of these three situations?
6. How did you define or understand the concept of trust before reading the book? Has the book changed your mind about how trust matters in the workplace? Are you energized to look for ways to improve the culture of trust in your company?



## THE APPLICATION

*The final third of TRUSTED LEADER breaks away from the story format to give you more of the research and concrete methods pioneered by the Trust Edge Leadership Institute. This final section of the discussion guide gives you a chance to focus specifically on each of the 8 Pillars and how you can start processing your needs and ideas for growing trust in your organization.*

### Chapter 23

## Clarity

1. Assess your company's or team's current top goals, objectives, and benchmarks. Do you have crystal clear answers to What? Why? When? and How? If you don't, make a list of your current priorities and projects and drill down until you get answers to these questions. If you manage a team, do this as a group exercise so the whole team has perfect clarity.
2. If you are reading this book in a group, practice the "How?" exercise together. Since you've all read the book, there is no danger of ending up like Ethan in his first attempt! Have everyone choose a current goal and answer "How" they will get there. Encourage each other to ask "How?" until they have come up with a concrete action that they can take today or tomorrow at the latest.

## Chapter 24

# Compassion

1. The connection between compassion and honest feedback, even when critical, often surprises people. When you have had to give difficult or sensitive feedback, was being compassionate your main goal? How would giving critical feedback change if you were you to approach the conversation with a genuine, compassionate desire to see the person succeed?
2. Review the LAWS of compassion on page 176 of *Trusted Leader*. Sometime this week, intentionally approach a conversation while actively trying to embody these four values: Listen, Appreciate, Wake up!, and Serve others. Afterward, take a few moments to intentionally reflect on what happened. Was the tone and outcome of this conversation different than others because of your new focus? How so?
3. For the next week, make it your goal to express appreciation to at least three people using the SPA method found on page 176. Make your appreciations Specific, Personal, and Authentic.

## Chapter 25

# Character

1. Review the discussion about decision-making values on page 183. As a group, identify the values that you want to serve as a guide in every business or team decision you make. Try this exercise as an individual as well! What values guide your personal decisions? (You don't have to share these answers, but you will find it valuable to bring these principles into your personal life as well.)
2. Character is one of the easiest pillars to lose sight of in the business world. Write up your decision-making values and place them in locations of prominence around your workspace. Review them before meetings where major decisions are made. Make it a default practice to review every decision to be sure it aligns with your established values.

## Chapter 26

# Competency

1. How does your organization support continuous learning? What continuing education or training do you already have access to? Compared to the number of programs at The Grove that Bob describes to Ethan, how does your organization stack up? While it may sound like a lot, our research as published in the Trust Outlook, indicates that to foster an environment where employees truly excel, this level of investment in learning and development is an absolute necessity, both for retention and for growth.

2. Think about the scenario in the story where Milo, a teenager who works just part time at the lodge, is able to save Ethan from a much more severe injury. What would it look like if your organization was able to foster that degree of competency at every level of your company? How would things change? What would be possible?
3. Speaking of Ethan's leg injury, which was a personal setback, how much care do we take to become aware of significant, personal setbacks that affect our colleague's or direct report's ability to perform well at work? What could we do to better show compassion and support while someone heals from a physical or emotional wound?

## Chapter 27

# Commitment

1. Remember that commitment starts with you, not with the person whose commitment you want to have. What are three ways that you can more actively demonstrate your commitment to the people around you? What about to the projects you are working on?
2. As a group, identify what you are committed to. Use the questions on page 196 to clarify your commitments: Who are we? What do we stand for? And what are we committed to?
3. Audit your own demonstrated commitment: How often do you deliver something later than you committed to and by how much? Why do you sometimes (or frequently) miss deadlines, even self-imposed ones? Consider what you can do to rectify this. Are you chronically mis-calculating the time a task will take you? If that is the case, try to make your promised turnaround times more realistic so you can meet those commitments. Or is someone else imposing clearly unreasonable timeframes on you? If it's the latter, you may need to have a conversation with your manager to explain why the time you are given is often not sufficient for the task at hand.

## Chapter 28

# Connection

1. The Trust Shield exercise that J.J. describes for the Brain Trust is explained in detail on page 201 of the Application section of the book. It does not require a facilitator. It can be done independently or with an informal, self-directed group. Email [info@TrustEdge.com](mailto:info@TrustEdge.com) for a FREE Trust Shield and try the exercise out! What did you learn about yourself? If you are working with a group, what did you learn about others that surprised you? This can be a very powerful exercise, especially when you share it with your colleagues.
2. Review the list of magnetic and repellant traits on page 206. Everyone has a mixture of both as a baseline. In what way or in what setting are you naturally magnetic? What traits from the repellant side are you sometimes guilty of slipping into? How can you build more magnetic traits into your day-to-day interactions?

## Chapter 29

# Contribution

1. An easy and immensely powerful way to supercharge a contribution culture is to try out the Difference-Making Action (DMA) tactic that Naomi explains to Ethan in the fable. Encourage everyone on your team to identify DMA's every morning for one week. Make sure each one is focused, clear, and realistic.
2. At the end of the week, get together with your team for a brief meeting and talk about what the experience was like. What changed about how you approached your work? What results did you get this week that were new and surprising?

## Chapter 30

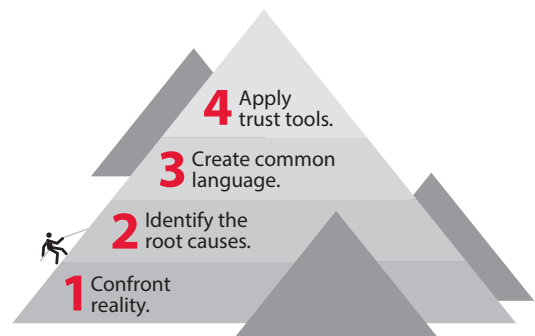
# Consistency

1. It seems strange to Ethan that Sunny leads a discussion of The Grove's longstanding mission in her weekly staff meeting, but this level of engagement with a company's mission is critical for maintaining consistency. Use the questions on page 217 to do a brand-assessment of your own brand and organization. Plan to make this a quarterly practice. Remember, the goal is consistency!
2. Habits, good OR bad, can be hard to break! When you have a good habit, this works in your favor, and consistency goes up. But breaking a bad habit can feel twice as hard. Identify a habit you'd like to shake and try out a few of the tactics on page 218. Write the habit down and then try to replace the habit with something new. This is often much easier than quitting cold turkey. Specificity will be your friend! Commit to a specific timeframe, and get as specific as Sunny would if she were asking you "How? How? and How?"

## Taking It to the Next Level

As you get ready to kick start your focus on trust, go back to pages 159-160 and consider how you can:

- Confront the reality that trust is always the core issue
- Identify the pillars that start to solve your core challenges as a leader
- Create a common language with your team
- Apply trust tools that can affect change, increase performance, and gain desired results



**The final question for you as a leader:** How can you consistently build the pillars of trust in yourself, your team, and your organization? It is the little things done consistently that make the biggest difference!



I hope this discussion guide has drawn you in a little closer to the lessons learned by our story's main character, Ethan Parker.

We all have a little bit of Ethan in us, don't we? Or perhaps you related to Sunny or Chef Lou better? They each had special qualities and skills, that's for sure. We tend to know our sweet spot, but when something goes wrong or we are in a crisis mode, things can become a lot more difficult and unclear. Inevitably, people have a couple of the 8 Pillars that are strong and a couple that are on the weaker side. This is where your increased awareness and hard work will help set you apart. Growing trust in your organization is not always easy, but it is always worth the effort!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Krueger". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "P" and "K".

We are here to help you become an even more Trusted Leader.  
Please visit: [www.TrustEdge.com](http://www.TrustEdge.com) or call 651-340-6555.