Credibility Discussion Questions

Chapter 1: Leadership is a Relationship

1. Look at the list of Characteristics of Admired Leaders. Of the seven you were told to make a mental note of earlier in the chapter, how many of the top four most-chosen characteristics— honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent—were on your list? Does it surprise you that these characteristics were most commonly valued? Why or why not?
2. The authors state that leadership is no longer determined by rank and privilege. Do you find this to be the case in your office? Why do you think rank now plays less of a role in leadership?
3. Do you view leadership as a relationship? Considering the leadership dynamics you see and experience in your workplace, would you say these leadership-relationships you have seen are fair and balanced? If not, how could you change that?
4. The authors mention that certain organizations value particular qualities more than others would—those in the health care industry, for example, would value "caring" more highly. What quality would your organization value above others? Why? What do you think this says about your company?
5. Considering that credibility is earned by small actions leader take over time, what actions have you taken—or seen others take—to enhance credibility? Were these actions effective in enhancing credibility? Why or why not?

Chapter 2: Credibility Makes a Difference

1. In what ways have you or leaders you know gotten to know constituents? How could you further foster this type of communication?
2. Think about a leader who you have willingly followed and who has influenced you in some way. What qualities did this person have that had an influence on you? What have you learned about leadership from this person's example?
3. Have you had an experience with a less-than-credible leader? In what ways was this person not credible? How has this experience shaped your views on the importance of credibility?
4. Define your organization's shared set of values and beliefs. Do you think your organization has the clarity, unity, and intensity required to adhere to these values and strengthen the "we-portion" of leadership credibility? If not, how can you change that?
5. The authors mention that, in order to sustain a relationship with his or her constituents and establish credibility, a leader should ideally be physically present so as not to become out of touch with constituents. Do you find this to be the case? Do you think it's possible for a leader to be off-site yet remain involved with constituents? How could this be done?

Chapter 3: Discover Your Self

1. What are the core principles that guide your life? Have they already guided your professional decisions in any way?

2. How clear have you been about your values? What could you do to better communicate these values to the people in your life?
3. Are you one of the 65 percent of people who would like to have more conversation about values at work? Why or why not? If so, how could you open up a dialogue on this topic?
4. Do you agree with the statement that the difference between moral and immoral leadership is that moral leaders provide people with choices and alternatives rather than impose the leader's will? Do you think there are other differences between moral and immoral leaders as well? Considering the qualities this book has discussed so far, what do immoral leaders lack?
5. What are your limitations as a leader? Have you ever had to step back and let someone else lead in a situation when you lacked the skills or knowledge to meet the demands of a task? How did you feel letting someone else take over?

Chapter 4: Appreciate Constituents

1. How much effort do you put into getting to know and understand your co-workers? What impact has this had on your professional relationship?
2. How do you incorporate social media into your workplace as a new means of communication? What impact has it had on communication?
3. How open are the feedback channels in your organization? Are you satisfied with the amount of feedback people currently give and receive in your workplace? If not, how could you increase opportunities for giving and receiving feedback?
4. Have you ever taken the first step to show your trust in someone before they trusted you? If so, how did you do it? What was the outcome?
5. In what ways is your workplace diverse? How has diversity positively impacted your organization?
6. What do you think the difference is between "constructive controversy" and unconstructive controversy? How could you promote the former in your workplace?

Chapter 5: Affirm Shared Values

1. How do you feel about your company's values? If there was something you or a co-worker wanted to change about them, what steps would you take to make that happen?
2. Would you use the word "community" to describe your work environment? If so, in what ways is it like a community?
3. What steps is your company taking to remain true to its values? How could you as an individual reinforce the values that you and your company share?
4. How often do you think employees should be recognized for what they do? What are some ways you could do this? Do you personally feel recognized for the contributions you make?
5. Do you think it is possible to successfully reconcile values dilemmas in the workplace? Why or why not?

Chapter 6: Develop Capacity

1. Do you believe it is helpful to teach people how to perform tasks outside their job descriptions? Why or why not?
2. Of the five essential components that go into developing capacity (competence, choice, confidence, climate, and communication), which do you most value and why?
3. Have you ever been given the discretion and latitude to decide for yourself what is right? How did you handle the situation? How did having this freedom make you feel?
4. How do you make others feel confident about themselves and the work they do? What do you think is the best way to do this?
5. What information about your organization do you think would be beneficial to share? In what ways could it help foster transparency? Is there anything you think would not be beneficial to share? If so, why?

Chapter 7: Serve a Purpose

1. As a leader, what are the best ways you can serve your constituents?
2. Do you rely more on technology or in-person contact to keep in touch with your co-workers? Which method do you find more effective? Do you find that there are benefits to keeping in touch with your co-workers?
3. Is there any story someone has told you that you find particularly striking? If so, what is it about this story that impacted you? What are some stories you could tell your team to inspire or teach them?
4. What was the last mistake you made in your organization? How did you handle it and what have you learned from it?
5. Do you "do what you say you will do" to demonstrate your commitment to your principles? How do you do this? Has it had an impact on your co-workers' actions or perceptions of you?

Chapter 8: Sustain Hope

1. How has having grit shaped your experiences in times of hardship? In what ways have you demonstrated your own grit?
2. What are you passionate about? How do you integrate your passions into your work? Do you think it is important to do this?
3. The authors write, "Hope is essential to achieving the highest levels of performance." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
4. Do you find it difficult to remain optimistic in the face of challenge? Why or why not?
5. How can you create a workplace that fosters friendships and personal connections? What exercises or strategies would you use to encourage this development?

Chapter 9: The Struggle to Be Human

1. How do you think leadership is—or should be—measured? How would you define a leader? What is your definition based on—this book, personal experience, or something else?
2. Of the six disciplines listed in Table 9.2, are there any you have fallen guilty of following from excellence to excess? Did the listed antidote help you come back from this, or was there something else that helped you?
3. Which discipline do you see as being the most dangerous if taken to excess? Why?
4. As a leader, what tensions about maintaining a balance in your organizational life do you find yourself wrestling with? How do you intend to resolve these tensions?
5. Do you agree with the authors that "building and sustaining credibility ultimately means being a perpetual learner"? What would you particularly like to learn in order to help yourself build credibility and become a better leader? What steps could you take to make this happen?