

## Discussion Questions for *The Truth About Leadership*

### Chapter 1: You Make a Difference

1. How have you encouraged employees who do not hold senior positions to be leaders? In what ways could you better show them that they are capable of making a difference?
2. Does Melissa remind you of anyone in your office? Why?
3. What could prevent employees from making a difference? How can you help them overcome these perceptions or obstacles?

### Chapter 2: Credibility is the Foundation of Leadership

1. Would you agree that credibility is the foundation of leadership? Are there any qualities from the list that you would rate higher?
2. How can you or your co-workers increase your credibility in the eyes of others? Were there particular methods listed in the chapter that you found helpful—or unhelpful? Why?
3. Have you ever noticed a discrepancy between what a leader does and what he or she says? How would you handle such a situation?

### Chapter 3: Values Drive Commitment

1. To what extent do values influence your perception of people, as opposed to their occupational background or any other factors?
2. Think about Unilever CEO Paul Polman's statement: "If your values, your personal values, are aligned with the company's values, you're probably going to be more successful longer term than if they are not. If they are not, it requires you to be an actor when you go to work or to be a split personality." Do you think it's possible for an employee to avoid this and still find success if his or her values misalign with an organization's values?
3. What is a good way to instigate an open discussion about values in the workplace? Would such an exercise be helpful?

### Chapter 4: Focusing on the Future Sets Leaders Apart

1. In this chapter recruitment consultant Jade Lui mentions needing to look into her past and search for recurring life-long dreams and central themes to understand her vision for the future. Take a moment to do the same. What central themes can you identify from your own life? How can you apply these themes to a vision of the future for your organization?
2. Would you follow the book's suggestion of setting up a futures research committee? Why or why not?
3. How would you encourage optimism—about the future or otherwise—in your workplace?

## **Chapter 5: You Can't Do it Alone**

1. In what ways have you showed empathy and sensitivity to others in your own work? What kind of impact did it have?
2. The chapter quotes food scientist Elaine Fan, who says that in order to be an effective leader, “you must understand the needs of your followers.” How would you go about understanding their needs in the first place?
3. Do you think there is enough communication, sympathy, and understanding in your workplace? Why or why not? What sort of effect have these qualities—or lack thereof—had on morale?

## **Chapter 6: Trust Rules**

1. What sort of exercises would you use to generate more trust in your workplace? How have you demonstrated your own trustworthiness?
2. Would you consider your organization a “high-trust organization” or a “low-trust organization”? Do you attribute this to anything in particular?
3. Have you or anyone you know violated any of the four actions Kouzes and Posner list for maintaining trustworthiness? What was done, and how have you learned from it?

## **Chapter 7: Challenge is the Crucible for Greatness**

1. What challenges has your business overcome? What impact have they had on you? What have you learned from them?
2. How would you encourage employees to embrace a seemingly unfortunate change?
3. The authors state that grit is always a quality possessed by those who demonstrate an ability to persevere. Would you say grit has played a large role in helping you overcome challenges, or would you attribute it to something else?

## **Chapter 8: You Either Lead by Example or You Don't Lead at All**

1. This chapter mentions feedback as a good way for leaders to hold themselves accountable. Is it easy to give and receive feedback in your office? How could you encourage feedback or make the process easier for employees?
2. Have you ever had to lead by example on certain initiatives? How much of an effect do you think this had on how receptive the employees were?
3. Do your coworkers feel comfortable admitting their mistakes? If not, why? Could this be encouraged more in the office?

## **Chapter 9: The Best Leaders Are the Best Learners**

1. How have you learned leadership skills—through books, others' examples, experimentation, observation, or in other ways? How would you go about teaching these skills to co-workers?

2. How do you forge and maintain “high-quality relationships” with co-workers? What benefits do these relationships have for you?
3. In what ways do you practice leadership? Have you found it to be helpful? Why or why not?

### **Chapter 10: Leadership is an Affair of the Heart**

1. What role has love—of any kind—played in your leadership endeavors? In your office? Based on these experiences, would you agree or disagree with the statement that leadership is an affair of the heart?
2. What “stories” do your co-workers know about their own organization? What do these stories say about your organization?
3. How available do you make yourself in the office? What more could you do to increase this availability?
4. Would you consider your workplace to be “a caring workplace”? Why or why not?