BOOK DISCUSSION: MANAGER INSTRUCTIONS

Use this tool as a manager to:
Plan, structure, and facilitate a team conversation on the book you have chosen. Reflect as a team on how the author’s ideas apply to your work.

Timeline:
Ensure that you have a timeline in place for your discussions. Remember to give enough time to complete the book and reflect on the content before the discussions are scheduled.

Audience:
Small teams of ideally no more than 8-10 members to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate. For leaders of managers, we recommend asking your direct reports to meet with their teams first. Smaller group sizes allow for all voices to be heard and enables a greater level of psychological safety, honesty and openness.

Format:
Below are two suggested formats for structuring your conversations, depending on your team members’ preferences, availability, and circumstances. If you have a third alternative, that is okay as long as it lends itself to a small team discussion (see “Who” above).

Manager setup instructions:
1. Decide on the format of your book conversation (see above)
2. The team manager should facilitate this initial set of conversations. If two small teams choose to join together for this conversation, two managers co-facilitating is also an option
3. Invite your team to the book discussion, taking into consideration individuals schedules and needs. In your email include:
   - A short agenda (see page two)
   - An outline of your intentions, expectations and goals for the discussion (see page two)
   - An ask of your team to read the book and reflect on the questions in the discussion guide ahead of the conversation
   - A note that you are available for your team to ask questions or discuss any concerns ahead of the conversation
BOOK DISCUSSION: FACILITATION TIPS

Manager Pre-Work:
Before you engage in a book discussion with your team, we recommend you spend some time reflecting on:

- Your own vulnerabilities leading into this conversation. What are they, and how could they limit/hinder your effectiveness as a facilitator and as a manager?
- The strengths you bring to the conversation that will help you effectively facilitate the conversation.
- Your desired intention and outcome of the conversation. What do you hope to achieve long-term by having this conversation with your team? (For example: the team to feel empowered to make changes happen or to speak up, or offer feedback on your own leadership)

Framing the Conversation:
It is important to frame the conversation with your team. Here are three important messages to make explicit before the conversation begins.

1. This conversation focuses on discussing the book and how the author’s ideas apply to our work as teams and as a company.
2. This is not a forum for asking black or employees of color to educate the group on what individuals should and shouldn’t do. We are all responsible for our own learning.
3. Acknowledge that everyone will be approaching the discussion from a different lens. The goal of the conversation is to chart a course for future actions.

Tips for facilitating the book discussion:

CREATE SHARED TEAM AGREEMENTS AND USE THEM. Take 5-10 minutes at the start to create a shared set of agreements or “norms” to ensure all team members feel comfortable speaking up. Refer back to your shared norms if anyone is taking up too much air space or veering off topic.

INVOLVE EVERYONE IN THE OPENING. At the start of the conversation, encourage everyone to share at least one reflection.

DON’T BE THE EXPERT. Your role as facilitator is to guide the discussion, not to be the expert. Sharing how you reflected on your own strengths and vulnerabilities will build trust and enable others to share more candidly.

STAY FOCUSED. The facilitator’s primary job is to keep the group focused. Watch out for tangents, and actively ask people to refocus when you sense they are going astray.

SOLICIT EQUAL PARTICIPATION. Make sure all perspectives are heard. Ask quieter voices to share their opinions, and if necessary, ask louder voices to make room for others.

ACTIVELY LISTEN. Help colleagues feel heard by paraphrasing and summarizing what you hear to check your understanding.

STAY CURIOUS. Probe deeper with questions such as “Tell me more about...”

IDENTIFY AT LEAST ONE TEAM TAKEAWAY. Share one takeaway the group will walk away with from the discussion.

CLOSE THE CONVERSATION. As the facilitator, share how this conversation has impacted you and offer space to others to do the same. This can be as simple as sharing one word to summarize feelings about the discussion.

ACKNOWLEDGE. Thank everyone for their courage and willingness to share their thoughts and experiences openly.

ENCOURAGE FURTHER LEARNING. Encourage continued reading, learning, and personal discovery.