

Taking the Lead Discussion Guide

Chapter 1: The Power of Influence

1. J.D.'s influence in my life helped me to gain confidence and eventually led to my being invited to join Joe Gibbs Racing at the ground floor. Who has been influential in your life? How did they gain that influence? In what ways has their influence made you a better you?
2. J.D.'s influence was often as simple as sitting with people who were lonely or making others feel wanted or approved. Consider your sphere of influence—home, work, school, church, your neighborhood. Can you think specifically of someone in each circle who might need encouragement or who could benefit from your influence? What steps could you take today or in the coming week to use your influence to benefit others?

Chapter 2: Make Yourself Indispensable

1. It was clear to me early in my time at Joe Gibbs Racing that the best way to prove my value was to make myself indispensable by creating my own niche within the company. Think about your own job. What part of your job would your organization have a difficult time hiring someone else to do?
2. I was the T-shirt guy, the gofer, the “whatever needed to be done” guy for many years. What are some specific ways you might be able to make yourself indispensable in your organization?

Chapter 3: Be a Fountain, Not a Drain

1. Very few of us get to do what we're best at 100 percent of the time. Never saying “That's not my job” is a key way to deliver more than you cost. How do you feel when presented with a task that is outside your job or specialty? What steps can you take to develop a greater willingness to accept these tasks as they arrive?
2. There are some people who breathe energy into every interaction (fountains) and others who suck the energy out of interactions (drains). What are some characteristics of the fountains in your life? What makes being around fountains so energizing? How can you be more fountain-like in your interactions?

Chapter 4: Be a Complement, Not a Clone

1. Delivering more than you cost means knowing yourself—your strengths, your weaknesses, your preferences, and where you can pitch in. Take several minutes and list some of your own traits. List at least five things that you think you're good at and five areas where you

think you could improve. Then, if you feel comfortable, invite a trusted friend or a supervisor to make a similar list and review it with you. How can you lean more into your strengths, and in what ways can those around you help you in your weaknesses?

2. Delivering more than you cost can be discouraging at times, especially when you feel like your full worth isn't being recognized. Have you ever felt discouraged in this way? How did you react, and what was the result? If being trustworthy in little things leads to being entrusted with larger things, how can you keep your situation in perspective the next time you feel underappreciated?

Chapter 5: Honoring God First and Foremost

1. I've said that the recipe for corporate culture is a mix of corporate beliefs, company behavior, and the leader's personality. At Joe Gibbs Racing, that has included our priorities to honor God, put people above profits, and relentlessly pursue winning.
 - How would you describe the corporate culture where you work?
 - What values does your organization subscribe to, and how are those values borne out in the decisions that are made?
 - What are the key traits of your organization's leaders?
 - How does your organization's culture affect your day-to-day job and decision making?
 - Ask yourself, "How can I positively affect and reflect our corporate culture today?"
2. One way that we have relentlessly pursued winning at JGR is by leaning on each other's strengths and by helping each other get better.
 - What key strengths do you contribute to your team?
 - In what areas do you think you could use your strengths to help your teammates get better?
 - In what ways can you rely on your teammates' strengths to bring better results?

Chapter 6: From Family Business to Factory

1. Great leaders are not afraid of taking risks. It was risky for Coach to return to the Redskins when his reputation was already secure, especially when his race team was expanding.
 - When you make tough decisions, what criteria do you use for evaluation?
 - How would you rate your risk tolerance on a scale of 1 to 10?
2. Measurable expectations are very important so that we always know if we are winning or losing. In landing FedEx as a sponsor, delivering more shipping business was the measurable goal.
 - Who is your customer, and do you have clearly defined expectations with them?
 - How about you personally? When you go in to work each day, do you have measurable goals and expectations? How about anyone who works for you?

Chapter 7: Fitting the Joe Mold

1. Part of creating a winning culture is hiring the right people. Coach hires people who fit “the Joe mold,” “butt-busters” with character, heart, and talent. How does your organization prioritize character, heart, and talent in the hiring process?
2. Would you describe yourself as a butt-buster? If so, in what ways? If not, identify three ways in which you could immediately start becoming a butt-buster.
3. Among your coworkers, who would you say is a butt-buster? What qualities make them a butt-buster?

Chapter 8: Buying In to a Culture of Yes

1. Knowing and communicating the “why” of your organization is crucial for buy-in.
More often than not, do you understand the why of your organization and do you feel bought in to it?
Do you understand why you do what you do on a daily basis and where that fits in to the company’s mission?
2. Reputation takes a long time to build up but can be destroyed very quickly. It is built up gradually, like a bank account, through small deposits, but large withdrawals can undo the work that has been done over time. What “deposits” can you make today in your personal reputation bank? In your organization’s? What steps can you take to guard your and your organization’s reputations?

Chapter 9: The Most Important Question

1. Every organization needs a guiding compass that directs its decisions. Our “true north” is going fast. What is your organization’s true north? What is your personal true north? How does that affect the way you make decisions every day?
2. Controlling our destiny in as many areas as possible helped us focus on our mission. In what ways does your organization control its own destiny? Are there opportunities to further control the process?

Chapter 10: People Fulfill the Mission

1. People are crucial because they help fulfill the mission. At JGR, even people who don’t touch the cars (like me) are critical to the mission of helping our cars go fast. Think about your role in your organization. How does your role contribute to the overall mission of the organization? How are you, like that janitor for NASA, “helping put a man on the moon”?
2. What percentage of the time do you feel like your tasks are mission critical versus feeling like they are insignificant or disconnected from your organization’s overall mission? Why

do you feel that way? Are there steps you can take to shift your mindset?

Chapter 11: A Mission-Critical Partner

1. I place such a high value on making plans that my family and coworkers call my anticipating contingencies “Dave’s plans.” Yet, as I outlined in this chapter, it’s not possible to plan for every potential situation. Are you a planner? What does “expect the unexpected” look like for you?
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how flexible are you when plans change? If you rated yourself lower than a 7, why did you do so? How would you benefit if you were more flexible? How would your organization benefit?

Chapter 12: The Last Plane Out of Vietnam

1. Trust and communication are important elements in any business relationship, but especially in an environment of urgency like ours at JGR. What are you doing to build trust with colleagues and supervisors in your organization? What does “managing up” look like in your role?
2. Coach’s sense of urgency permeates our culture and is reflected in his saying that we need to stay humble but also stay hungry. What does “humble and hungry” look like in your organization? How about in your personal life? How do you fight against complacency in your successes?

Chapter 13: People before Profits

1. Treating people as transactions means viewing them as a means to an end. Treating people as souls means valuing who they are as people. How would you rate yourself in this area? Think about your next few upcoming interactions. What specifically can you do to show you value the other person for who they are, rather than for what they contribute?
2. Coach’s compliment about me to my dad filled my tank for years. Think about those around you—people above, equal, and particularly anyone lower than you in the organizational structure. How can you be intentional in complimenting and encouraging them and in communicating to them how valuable they are?

Chapter 14: Conflict, Hard Messages, and Crisis

1. Conflict, hard conversations, and crises are things that every person will have to deal with at some point, and for leaders, developing the skills to handle these well is crucial. How would you rate yourself at handling conflict at work? How about in your other spheres of influence? Would your coworkers or boss say you are someone who runs into a crisis or

- runs away from one?
2. The internal conflicts we inevitably face determine how we handle external conflicts. What internal conflicts have shaped you? How can you use what you have learned (and are learning) from those conflicts to equip you to better empathize with others dealing with conflicts in their own lives?

Chapter 15: Business Is Relationships

1. Business is relationships, and relationships require intentionality and care to grow. Make a list of relationships inside and outside of your organization that you can be more intentional with in the coming weeks, which may benefit from just showing up.
2. Transaction-based conversations center on performance; soul-based conversations center on people. Be deliberate this week with making your interactions more soul based than transaction based.

Chapter 16: Traits of the Greats

1. What would it look like for you to make FedEx's Purple Promise? In other words, What can you do to "make every experience outstanding"?
2. One of the things I admire about Interstate Batteries' people is that every interaction with them fills my tank. Who are the fountains in your organization, and what traits make them that way? How can you be a fountain to those around you?
3. Consider the five key words of Mars's culture: quality, responsibility, mutuality, efficiency, and freedom. Which of these traits do you think your organization excels in? In which do you think there is room to grow?
4. Toyota's belief that there is "no best, only better" helps to guard them against complacency. What are specific areas you can push to be better in your daily work? Your life?

Chapter 17: Achieving That Elusive Work-Life Balance

1. It is easy for us to let our work define who we are. Think of the things and the people that give meaning to your life. How would your life look different if you put more of a priority on those people and things?
2. I've argued in this chapter that balanced employees are better employees. How balanced is your work and life in this season? Maintaining balance requires intentionality. In what ways can you be more intentional about the balance between work and life? Whom can you enlist to keep you accountable or to help you in this?

Chapter 18: Investing Most in Who Matters Most

1. Part of winning at life is keeping our priorities straight, investing most in those who matter the most to us. Look at the circle diagram on page XX. Think about who in your life fits in to each circle. Now look at how you spend your time and effort. Are there any changes you need to make going forward?
2. Who are the people who made it possible to reach where you are now? Make a list of the things they did to support you. How can you express your gratitude to them now?

Chapter 19: Not the Same Ol' J.D.

1. How do you make sense of difficult times that don't go according to plan? Where do you turn for strength or guidance?
2. Todd had the guts to speak up during a difficult emotional time for the good of the company. How are you with speaking up during a tough situation? What gives you courage in times like these?