

Spark Impact in Just One Hour

Value-Building Experiences
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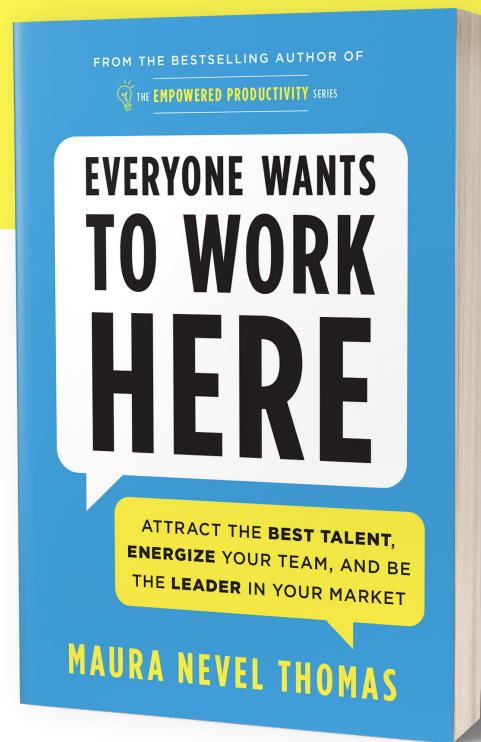
Discussion Guide:

Everyone Wants to Work Here

By Maura Nevel Thomas

Includes printable worksheet for meeting participants

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BOOK DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION: THE SHIFT TO KNOWLEDGE WORK

- Based on the definition in this chapter, would you consider yourself a knowledge worker?
- Does this way of looking at work and relying on your brain as an essential tool make you think differently about your ability to do your job?
- Does this outlook change how you think about your relationship between your physical and emotional well-being, and your work?

CHAPTER 1: THE MOST IMPORTANT JOB OF A LEADER IS TO THINK

- What are ways you could increase the time your team is engaged with high-priority tasks—operating in slow-thinking and proactive mode—versus a reactive frame of mind?
- How do you feel about your productivity when juggling multiple tasks at the same

time? Do you feel differently when you have undistracted work time set to tackle thoughtful work?

- Do you think your team's motivation and engagement would change if they could dedicate more time toward making progress on their highest priorities? How would that change your interactions with them?

CHAPTER 2: HOW LEADERS CAN SPEND MORE TIME “ON” THE BUSINESS THAN “IN” THE BUSINESS

- Have you thought about how to empower your team to solve more problems on their own without your intervention?
- What would it take to make work more intentional and methodical across your organization? Are there small steps you could take toward a larger goal?
- Have you ever had the chance to work in an asynchronous way where important details needed to do your work were always available, organized, and centralized in one place? How does it compare to how your work is done right now?

CHAPTER 3: CHANGING A CULTURE OF URGENCY

- Have you ever thought about how your use of email at work affects your employees? What unconscious calculations could be driving how you use email now?
- What technology can you employ or eliminate right now to help reduce unnecessary distractions?

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- What email habits can you identify now that undermine your productivity, or that of your team?

CHAPTER 4: FAST DOESN'T EQUAL BETTER

- How do the customer service or sales teams operate in your organization right now? Do they have time to thoughtfully consider how best to respond internally or externally? Are there ways to elevate concerns that are more pressing?
- Do you have a communication policy or guidelines in place right now that are tailored to different teams and their work? If so, are there any changes you might make to them in light of new information presented here?
- What did you think of the idea of reinvesting an organization's reputation capital to rethink and transform your organization's culture, so that it supports your team's ability to do their best work?

CHAPTER 5: A LEADERSHIP FORMULA TO EMPOWER TEAMS

- How did you feel when you read Maura's advice for leaders to be available less often so employees learn how to solve problems on their own? Does it make you rethink how you can be most helpful to your team?
- What ideas for shifting one-on-one meetings so they are shorter and more effective resonated with you? Are there ideas there you can implement right away with your team?
- Do you think you have a safe environment to make mistakes on your team? How can you use mistakes as a teaching opportunity in your organization?

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- Can you remember an experience when someone offered you advice on how you handled something that already happened, versus telling you what to do up front? How were the two situations different for you?

CHAPTER 6: TAKE VACATION SERIOUSLY

- Have you ever resisted taking time off? What were your reasons for not wanting to take time off? Is it common for leadership at your organization to take less time off than they could?
- What strategies have you employed in your organization to encourage employees to truly disconnect during vacation time? Have you considered the importance of downtime and how it affects burnout, physical and emotional well-being, creativity, and motivation?
- Have you ever looked at your expectations of your team members and considered if they align with your company values and leadership beliefs? For example, do your employees believe that working 50+ hours is critical to success? What other unspoken beliefs could be undermining your culture?
- Were you surprised to learn about the downsides of an “unlimited time off” policy?

CHAPTER 7: HOW REMOTE AND HYBRID WORK ARE CHANGING BUSINESS

- Does your organization currently offer remote or hybrid work? Do you have any formal criteria upon which to evaluate how it’s working for the organization right now?

- If your organization offers remote or hybrid work, what criteria do you use to evaluate how it's working for your team?
- How does your organization define employee "accessibility" for remote or hybrid team members? Have you witnessed any examples of employees responding outside of regular work hours and if so, does that line up with your expectations?

CHAPTER 8: NECESSARY COMMITMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL REMOTE AND HYBRID TEAMS

- How would you assess your organization's work culture right now? Would employees say it is high pressure? What are the factors that contribute to their answer?
- How can you exert a positive influence on your team's well-being? Are there ideas in the book that you had not previously considered that you are considering now?
- What are some possible payoffs for finding ways to remove distractions that are interfering with your team's ability to get important work done?

CHAPTER 9: THE PROBLEM WITH SYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION AND REMOTE WORK

- What tools do you currently use to communicate asynchronously and synchronously at your organization? Do you see room to rethink how your organization communications internally and externally to improve focus and productivity for everyone?
- Do you give employees guidance about which communication tools to use and in

which situations to bring clarity to how you'd like everyone to interact? How might those guidelines be a little different for those outside the organizations, like clients or customers?

- Do you feel overwhelmed by your video meeting schedule? What changes are you considering based on the suggestions offered in this chapter?

CHAPTER 10: WORK-LIFE BALANCE

- How do you encourage employees' creativity and innovation right now? Are there ways you have not previously tried to further encourage employees' well-being and downtime?
- Have you had a personal experience when a work deadline or urgent message disrupted your time off? How did you handle it knowing what you know now about how important recharging is for all knowledge workers?
- Have you assessed your own and team members' risk of burnout recently?

CHAPTER 11: THE NEW REALITIES OF OFFICE WORK

- How are employees empowered to reduce distractions at the office or at home?
- What low-cost, low-effort adjustments can you make to an existing open office floor plan to make it a more productive space for your employees? Are there some ideas you found in this chapter you plan to implement and share?
- Do you currently have ways to invite natural light, nature sounds, or views of the outdoors into your workspace to tap into the benefits of exposure to nature? What ideas did this bring up for you?

CHAPTER 12: MEASURING THE PRODUCTIVITY OF KNOWLEDGE WORK

- Have you ever reflected on what progress looks like to you? Do you have productivity goals set for yourself and for your organization?
- What unconscious calculations have you spotted in yourself that are not supporting your own productivity and success?
- Who in your organization is responsible for ensuring all team members have the skills needed to track work, monitor workflow and assess training needs to affect individual and organizational success? Should others on your executive team be part of this process?

CONCLUSION: CREATE YOUR CULTURE WITH INTENTION

- How do your current beliefs, values, and goals specifically address your team's opportunity to do their best work? Have you found any areas of disconnect that surprised you?
- What ways have you been modeling behaviors for your team? Has this book offered you additional ways to do this, to influence well-being and productivity for yourself and others?
- What evaluation criteria will you use that measures progress on significant results for yourself and your employees?

Contact us to learn more or tell us about how this Discussion Guide sparked impact for you and your team!

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