Reclaiming Higher Ground
Book Discussion Group

A Guide for Setting up a Discussion Group

Setting up Your Book Discussion Group

There are three central themes running through *Reclaiming Higher Ground*:

1. Our Souls have become estranged from our places of work and there is a universal yearning to invite Spirit back to our enterprises.

2. We have acquired extraordinary skills, great theories and much technology for producing answers but we have forgotten to ask questions.

3. Our lives are laced with a toxic brew of conflict, fear and competition which has given rise to a deep hunger for love, compassion, collaboration and partnership.

Many Book Discussion Groups are designed to thrive on debate, argument and heated discourse which leads to a discussion based on conflict, polemics, power and ego. This does not fit with the message or teaching of *Reclaiming Higher Ground*. Instead, we suggest the three themes above as organizing principles for a Book Discussion Group. So it is appropriate to invite participants in your Book Group to work together in a Soulful way, to ask questions rather than assert that any one person has THE answer and to share your time together in a loving way.

Options for Getting Your Discussion Going:

1. You may want to pick a topic for review

2. You may want to develop a structured discussion program

3. You may want to use the Spirit@Work® Cards

You may want to pick a topic for review…

- **Pick a topic**

- **Select the appropriate chapter as a reading assignment prior to your Discussion Group meeting**

- **Use the chapter notes below to prompt the discussion**

1. Questions (Chapter 1 – Body and Soul)

2. Values (Chapter 2 – Values-centered Leadership®)

3. Truth and Promises (Chapter 3 – Truth-telling and Promise-keeping)

4. Grace (Chapter 4 – The Courage to Live with Grace)

5. Love (Chapter 5 – The Alchemy of the Soul and Chapter 9 – Competitive Spirit)

6. Joy (Chapter 6 – Blithe Spirit)

7. Reward (Chapter 7 – Soul Provider)

8. Soulspace (Chapter 8 – Soulspace)

9. Knowledge (Chapter 10 – Head First)

10. Trust (Chapter 11 – The Invisible Code)

11. Structure (Chapter 12 – Form Follows Function)

12. Creativity (Chapter 13 – The Soul and the Muse)

13. Learning (Chapter 14 – Fuel for the Soul)

14. Ownership (Chapter 15 – Soul Proprietor)

15. Teamwork (Chapter 16 – When Team Members Come and Go)

16. Community (Chapter 17 – Community)

17. Profit (Chapter 18 – A Profit with Honor)

18. Courage (Epilogue – Some Thoughts about Building a Sanctuary for the Soulful Revolutionary)

The Future – What Will You Commit to Now?

During, or perhaps after your Book Discussion Group meetings, you will find that you become energized with a passion for building the Soulful workplace. This is a moment of great opportunity and danger. In the epilogue of *Reclaiming Higher Ground*, I have written that creating the Soulful Workplace requires great courage, much effort and positive energy and patience. It is easy to become discouraged because we are impatient, lack courage or resources or support. It is at these moments that we need to draw on our Spiritual energies, and gain strength from the Sanctuary we have created—even if this amounts to just one other person. You may find that your Discussion Group becomes an important Sanctuary for you and therefore a great source of Spiritual energy. Consider how you might use this to your advantage as you plan the Soulful journey on which you are about to embark.

Reader's Companion to Reclaiming Higher Ground: Creating Organizations that Inspire the Soul
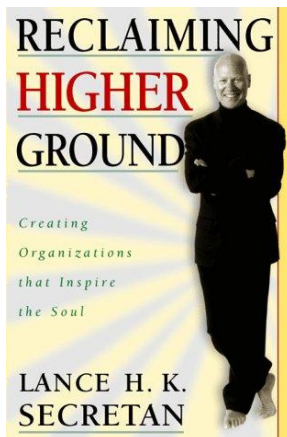
by Lance Secretan

United States: McGraw-Hill
Canada: MacMillan Canada
India: Free Press
Germany: Lichtenberg (titled "Soul-Management")
China: McGraw-Hill International Enterprises, Taiwan

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You may want to develop a structured discussion program

1. Complete the Soulscreen on page 236 of **Reclaiming Higher Ground** and compare answers. Ask questions about how one might improve conditions in your work and personal life to inspire the Soul. Invite others to contribute their learnings and successes in each area.

2. Select one of the topics below, review the chapter contents and begin by asking one or two of the questions suggested.

3. Try to avoid a deterioration in the discussions. Try to avoid the discussion becoming an "ain't it awful" (awfulizing session) by asking everyone to be constructive, to search for better ways and to ask questions that move us towards light rather than heat.

1. Body and Soul

- Is there a great yearning in our hearts at work? For what? Have we lost our Souls at work?

- Are we under a spell, having fallen for limited possibilities? What might the expanded possibilities look like?

- What fundamental changes must we make and why are we afraid to change? How did this happen? How will we break the spell and reclaim higher ground?

- Why, beyond money and security, do people work? Why are you working? Is it recognition, motivation, personal development, to have a sense of meaning, to play, to give service and to build social relationships? In other words, do we all seek to fulfill our Souls as much as our personalities? As leaders, is it appropriate that we should be called upon to become the custodians of the human Spirit?

- Are our Souls inspired when we know that our work helps us to leave the planet in a better condition than we found it, when we make our work our Spiritual practice?

- Matthew Fox suggests that we each ask ourselves a searching question: "Is my work smaller than my Soul?" How do you respond to this question?

2. Values-centered Leadership®

I have written that our corporate culture is the unspoken code that unites us as a tribe within great organizations—do you agree?

- What kind of culture best romances outstanding performances from every team member?

- How do we create a *Sanctuary*?

- Do the *Primary Values of Mastery, Chemistry and Delivery* and their *Accelerators, Learning, Empathizing and Listening* fit comfortably with your values?

- How could you adopt the **Values Cycle**?

- Use the **Vector** on page 54 of **Reclaiming Higher Ground** to evaluate your the position of your own values.

- Can you articulate your own personal Values Statement using **Values-centered Leadership**® as your basis?

- How would you apply the **Shifts** on the front wheel of **The Values Cycle**

- How can you ensure that you reclaim timeless values in your life and use them to guide every decision and strategy?

3. Truth-telling and Promise-keeping

- Do we tell the truth in our annual reports, our advertising, public relations, lobbying, performance appraisals, budgets and forecasts? How can we change?

- Do we tell the truth in our personal relationships? How can we do better?

- Do our employees receive consistent messages, knowing that they are our most valuable asset and that we are not secretly planning to downsize, re-engineer, restructure or de-layer them?

- How can we use truth-telling and promise-keeping to regenerate ourselves and restore credibility and integrity in organizations?

4. The Courage to Live with Grace

- How can we reacquire the grace to appreciate the natural elegance of human relationships?

- How can we turn every communication and relationship into beautiful music?

- How can we reach the state of grace necessary where charm and integrity maintain the necessary symmetry in all our relationships?

- Do we have the grace to integrate ourselves with those with whom we interact?

- Can we guide relationships with a sure hand that seeks to make every Soul whole - first with itself, but also with the universe?

- Do we have the courage to practice grace in a graceless world?

- Are we honoring our personal mission to be in a state of grace with everyone we have touched, when our Soul leaves this planet?

Grace with Employees:

- How can we use grace to repair dysfunctional relationships, improve communications, build teamwork and significantly reduce work-related stress?

- How can we avoid tangled, politically charged relationships in modern organizations?

- How can we increase our civility?

- Robert Fulghum has written, "Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people...Clean up your own mess...Say sorry when you hurt somebody...hold hands and stick together."

- What would happen if everyone made up before they left the office?

Grace with Customers:

- In Japanese, the word for customer is *okyakusama*: honored guest. How can we honor our customers and dedicate our businesses to serving them with integrity, so we can thrive in the new millennium?

- Peter Block has written, "The role of the customer is to teach companies to do business with them." Have we learned this? How can we do better?

Grace with Suppliers (Partners):

- Do we make it easy and fun for our suppliers to do business with us?

- Can we avoid subjecting suppliers to the indignities of submitting tenders, forcing them to compete against one another, withholding critical and helpful information and then awarding business solely on the basis of the lowest price?

- How can we achieve win/win relationships with suppliers and ensure their motivation and loyalty and inspire their Souls?

- Do we form partnerships with our suppliers, disclose our objectives and agree on a shared vision and desired outcomes with them, thus helping them to have an inspiring relationship with us?

5. The Alchemy of the Soul

- Are the negative energies of fear, intimidation, aggression and hostility making us sick? How can we use our Spirituality at work to regain our health?

- Are we fully inviting the healing and positive energies of love, excellence and service to regenerate our Souls? Can we eliminate corporate toxicity caused by conflict, power and fear, and thus enable individuals to work without cringing?

- How can we be sure we are focusing on the positive power of Spiritually reinforcing language and words in all written, verbal and visual communications, thus regenerating individuals and their organizations so that the Souls of customers and employees are drawn to them by their positive experiences?

6. Blithe Spirit

- Has work become a four-letter word?

- How can we make our work more than just a job?

- How can we make our work as natural as play?

- How can we deliberately blur the lines between work and play so the two are equally joyful and fulfilling?

- In the fast-forward age of "doing more with less", how can ensure we remember to have fun at work?

- Can we arrange our affairs so that the Soul, just as much as the personality, thrives on playfulness and bliss?

7. Soul Provider

- How do we implement an organization-wide understanding that rejects the "one size fits all" approach to reward systems?

- Are we motivating the Souls of our employees with tailor-made, unique combinations of rewards?

- Can we dismantle the old-fashioned reward systems that only pay homage to the needs of the personality? Most important, how do we design approaches that reward the Soul as effectively as we have learned to reward the personality?

- Can we make our reward systems fit the needs of the Soul AND make life easy in the payroll department and for those who have to implement and administer compensation systems.

- Do we have as many approaches as we have individuals? What will it take to achieve this? What part will I play in bringing about this change?

8. Soulspace

- Is my Soul stirred by my work-environment?

- How do we remove the institutional sense of sterility at work that withers the Soul?

- We are responsible for appreciating the impact of the physical working environment on the Souls of our employees. How do we achieve this, enhance their environmental context and invest in its improvement?

- Our Souls need both ethics and aesthetics in our work environments. How can we achieve this?

- Thomas Moore has written, "If we have plastic plants, we will have plastic thoughts." Should we remove plastic plants? What should we replace them with?

- Are people and their environment indivisible? In what ways?

- How should we change our working environments so that people will deliver inspired performances resulting from their sense of feeling seamlessly integrated with an inspiring physical environment?

9. Competitive Spirit

- Can war or the fear of losing motivate the Soul?

- What is the difference between trying to beat virtuoso performances out of people as opposed *romancing* high performance from them?

- If we love what we do (*Mastery*), love the people with whom we do it (*Chemistry*), and love the reason for doing it (*Delivery*), should we still call it work?

- Can we successfully redefine "winning" as "going as far as you can using everything that you have got"?

- Is there any need for someone to lose or die—or even go out of business—in order for us to "win"?

- Do we have too much competition and fear in all our lives already? Is it true that we are all yearning for more compassion, care, sensitivity and integrity?

10. Head First

- Why do we hide financial, marketing, technical and operating information from employees?

- If we cannot trust our employees with sensitive information, why are they part of the team?

- Is there ever a need or justification for clandestine meetings? If so, how should this be handled so that we respect the Soul?

- Is there any more justification for withholding information from employees than, say, withholding the musical score from an orchestra or the strategy from an Indianapolis 500 team?

- Is it safe to assume that employees are intelligent and trustworthy unless they prove us wrong?

- Should we not assume that all decisions, small and large, affect those working in an organization and that people therefore have the right to the full disclosure of any information that affects their lives?

- As leaders, should we not become transparent rather than opaque by fully involving employees and inviting their input into all decision-making?

11. The Invisible Code

- Do rules chafe the Soul?

- Is the Soul naturally inclined to migrate to freedom and unity?

- Does a highly focussed team that shares a passion for an agreed vision and clear values, need many rules?

- How do we invite and honor good judgment?

- For a team that becomes a coalition of inspired Souls, can we replace rules, procedures and policies with trust?

12. Form Follows Function

- Traditional hierarchical and functional structures create "silos" of information, generate negative energy, impair communications and weaken individual and organizational potential. How shall we begin the process of dismantling these inappropriate edifices and liberating our Souls?

- Since people and knowledge are the two most important assets of evolved organizations, are knowledge-intensive functions the responsibility of *all employees*, instead of just a few specialized departments?

- Does a short and direct path between knowledge and action help to inspire the Soul? How?

13. The Soul and the Muse

- Is your organization suppressing creativity at work, thus denying a fundamental right of the Soul? How can you change this?

- There are two ways to grow: innovation (doing things differently) and kaizen (doing the same things better). Are we fully practicing these subtle and different parts of creativity to energize the Souls of outstanding people and their organizations?

- Do you feel empowered to use all of your potential creative energy? Is this so for your colleagues? How can you release the creative powers of all of the Souls in your organization?

- The Soul yearns to evolve and to be free. How are you using creativity—one of the most powerful sources of both?

14. Fuel for the Soul

- Is your organization distinguished by the Mastery of the individuals within?

- Is your organization renowned for its Mastery?

- Since Mastery is achieved through *learning*, the survival and personal development of individuals, and therefore their organizations, depends on a powerful commitment to learning (the accelerator that drives Mastery on the back wheel). Does your organization possess an adequate commitment to *learning*? If not, how can you make it so?

- Does your organization invest 10% of payroll in personal and professional development? If not, how can this be achieved?

- Whether your organization supports you or not, do you invest 10% of your working time in *learning*—the *fuel of the Soul*?

15. Soul Proprietor

- Ownership connects the organization with its lifesource—the Soul of the individual. Do adequate opportunities for ownership exist where you work?

- Does your organization separate the source of capital and wealth creation from the source of its production, as a tree may be separated from its roots?

- Do you own sufficient corporate equity to inspire your Soul?

16. When Team Members Come and Go

- I have stated that all work is teamwork. Do you agree?

- Because the members of your teams depend on others, do they have the responsibility for selecting and replacing members and are they empowered to do so?

- The mutual success of individual personalities in a team depends on the collective success of their Souls. How can this be achieved?

- I have written that when team members underperform, it is an expression of failed leadership, a failure to select, lead, teach, motivate, inspire or coach adequately. Does this fit with your view? What are the implications for you?

- How can we share the responsibility for enhancing teamwork with the leader, so that together we regenerate and augment everyone? Is this essential in maintaining team excellence and a Soulful workplace?

17. Community

- Is there a widespread and growing yearning to recover our lost sense of community?

- Can we do more than continue to complain about our legislators and politicians, while never becoming part of the solution? How can we best become more involved in the solutions that will lead to inspiration of the Soul?

- Can we simply continue to keep taking from our communities, where we earn our livelihood, without giving back in return? If not what is the alternative? To what are we each personally prepared to commit—not in money alone, but in passion, time and visceral involvement?

- How can we all be active and participate at the grass roots level within the political spectrum of our communities, in ways that each of us choose? In what ways can our organization support this change?

18. A Profit with Honor

- Do we consider profits appropriately? If not, how should we refresh our thinking about the bottom line?

- In an earlier book, *The Way of the Tiger*, I have written, "Profit is like oxygen, essential for our survival but not the point of our existence." Do you agree? How could we change our thinking to accommodate this view?

- If financial performance is the personality's way of measuring profit, how would the Soul measures profits?

- If we build Soulful businesses, will the profits come?