



## Discussion Guide

*An Everyone Culture: Becoming a  
Deliberately Developmental Organization*

Explore a powerful new way of working and growing together with your colleagues, friends, or team.

## About the Book

In most organizations nearly everyone is doing a second job no one is paying them for—namely, covering their weaknesses, trying to look their best, and managing other people’s impressions of them. There may be no greater waste of a company’s resources. The ultimate cost: neither the organization nor its people are able to realize their full potential.

What if a company did everything in its power to create a culture in which everyone—not just select “high potentials”—could overcome their own internal barriers to change and use errors and vulnerabilities as prime opportunities for personal and company growth?

*In most organizations, nearly everyone is doing a second job no one is paying them for...*

The authors have found and studied such companies—Deliberately Developmental Organizations. A DDO is organized around the simple but radical conviction that organizations will best prosper when they are more deeply aligned with people’s strongest motive, which is to grow. This means going beyond consigning “people development” to high-potential programs, executive coaching, or once-a-year off-sites. It means fashioning an organizational culture in which support of people’s development is woven into the daily fabric of working life and the company’s regular operations, daily routines, and conversations.

*An Everyone Culture* dives deep into the worlds of three leading companies that embody this breakthrough approach. It reveals the design principles, concrete practices, and underlying science at the heart of DDOs—from their disciplined approach to giving feedback, to how they use meetings, to the distinctive way that managers and leaders define their roles. The authors then show readers how to build this developmental culture in their own organizations.

This book demonstrates a whole new way of being at work. It suggests that the culture you create is your strategy—and that the key to success is developing everyone.

Available online at <http://amzn.to/21qBo5z>. Volume discounts of up to 60% off available from Harvard Business Review Press at [booksales@harvardbusiness.org](mailto:booksales@harvardbusiness.org).

## Author Biographies

**Robert Kegan** and **Lisa Lahey**, coauthors of *Immunity to Change* and *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work*, have been research and practice collaborators for thirty years. Kegan is the Meehan Professor of Adult Learning and Professional Development at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education. Lahey, also on the Harvard faculty, is a founding principal of Minds at Work, a leadership-learning professional services firm. **Matthew L. Miller** is a lecturer on education and Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. **Andy Fleming** is the CEO and a founding principal of Way to Grow INC, the research and consulting home of the Deliberately Developmental Organization™. **Deborah Helsing** is an adjunct lecturer on education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Director of Coach Learning Programs at Minds at Work.

## Why Discuss This Book?

Ask most people what comes to mind when they think of being at work, and you hear some common responses. What comes to mind for you?

When we ask a version of this question, people share many things—from the to-do list of projects on their plates, to their manager or coworkers, to sources of stress, to ways they make a meaningful contribution. What most people *don't* say when we ask them this question is that thinking about work makes them think of *personal growth*.

But what if you, your team, your colleagues, or your friends could glimpse together a possible future of the workplace, one in which everyone is genuinely growing together at work every day? What if this possible future was visible today in companies with a deliberately developmental culture—one that assumes you can't be successful, improving, and growing as a company if your people aren't also growing, too?

Reading and discussing *An Everyone Culture* can open up a fascinating conversation about meaningful questions:

- What does it mean to keep growing in adulthood?
- How do companies and other organizations actually benefit from more radical, daily investments in their people?
- What does it look like—for leaders, managers, and employees—to be working deliberately on developing themselves and each other as part of the flow of daily work?
- What are the ingredients, on a very practical level, for creating wide-scale growth in an organization?
- According to research, the generation of Millennials places a high value on experiencing growth at work. How will our workplaces need to change to deliver on the promise of ongoing development and the growth that they expect?
- As a leader, manager, or employee, how can you help yourself and others to experience personal growth—the kind of change in capability and mindset that is far more than just acquiring more training or discrete technical skills?
- Are we expecting enough from our workplaces and working lives?

# Discussion Guide

## Prereading Thought Exercise

As you prepare for a group book discussion of *An Everyone Culture*, you might find it useful to do the following quick thought exercise.

Think of a specific time in which you experienced **significant growth** in your life. This could be in your childhood or adolescence or in adulthood, at work or in your educational or personal life. In what ways did you grow? What changed about you over time? What were the circumstances or factors that helped to foster your growth? Who was helpful to you in your growth? How were they helpful, and what did they do?

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## Plan for Discussion

- As a warm-up, you might discuss your responses to the prereading thought exercise. You might allow everyone to share their significant growth experiences and identify commonalities and differences in your experiences.
- Discuss the more general ideas of the book using some or all of the **General Questions** below.
- Dive more deeply into ideas that most interest your discussion group using the **Deeper-Dive Questions** below.
- You could consider closing your discussion by identifying ways you can experiment with at least one idea or concept in the book in your own daily life or in an organization or team you care about.

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## General Questions

1. What is meant by the term “an everyone culture”? And by the term “deliberately developmental organization” (DDO)?
2. What are your own views about how people grow in adulthood? What beliefs do you have about how adults develop (and how they don’t or can’t grow)? In what areas of

their lives does growth happen? One way to think about your own growth is to complete the following sentence with a reflection about something that matters to you:

“When I was younger as an adult, I *used to think* \_\_\_\_\_, and *now I think* \_\_\_\_\_. What changed is that I \_\_\_\_\_.”

3. Have you ever been part of any group or community that had some elements of a DDO? If so, what reminds you of a DDO about your own experience?
  4. What, if anything, are you most skeptical of when you think about DDOs? What’s a way that you could see this concept being implemented that would alarm you? Why?
  5. What, if anything, do you find most inspiring, hopeful, or aligned with your own values about DDOs? What appeals to you most? Why?
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## Deeper-Dive Questions

### *Introduction*

#### *Chapter 1 (“Meet the DDOs”)*

1. On pp. 8-10, the authors talk about the rise of the “new incomes” of work and competing definitions of “happiness” as rewards. How do your experiences align or not with the evolution described?
2. In Chapter 1, you took a quick tour of three different companies that are DDOs: Next Jump, Bridgewater, and Decurion. What stories in this chapter most intrigued you? For example, did any of the following brief portraits from the chapter resonate with you or raise questions for you? At Next Jump: Super Saturday, Boot Camp, coaching and FLO, and Jackie’s story. At Decurion: the company’s “axioms,” the fishbowl conversation and the Theater Workgroup, and Nora’s challenge. At Bridgewater, Sergio and the failed meeting, the Principles, “probing,” and John Woody’s challenge?

#### *Chapter 2 (“What Do We Mean by Development”)*

3. According to the authors, what does “development” mean?
4. Do you agree with the argument that “the demands on followers and leaders” require individuals and organizations to focus on helping people reach greater levels of mental complexity? Why or why not?
5. On p. 83, the authors invite you think about the differences between ordinary organizations and DDOs. They argue that “An ordinary organization may not even know it is doing it, but, at bottom, it is trying to minimize a certain kind of disturbance. It wants threats to certainty, predictability, routine, control, and connection to be as

few as possible so that the work can get done without unnecessary emotional noise and distraction.” Does this accord with your own experience? Why or why not?

### *Chapter 3 (“A Conceptual Tour of the DDO”)*

6. What do the authors mean when they say that a DDO has the qualities of “*Edge*,” “*Home*,” and “*Groove*,” working together in deep alignment? What might it mean to be strong on two of these qualities but very weak on the third?
7. Of the 12 features of a DDO that are described in Chapter 3, which stood out the most for you? Which, if any, of these would you like to see present in your own organization or working life?
8. On pp. 106-108, the authors describe a feature of DDOs they call “The Interior Life Is Part of What Is Manageable.” How would you feel about working in an organization in which there was more open, shared, routine discussion of the way you and your colleagues *think*?

### *Chapter 4 (“In the Groove”)*

9. The authors talk about the idea of having a mindset of *practicing* rather than merely performing or demonstrating expertise already acquired (pp. 123-25). Have you ever experienced growth because you allowed yourself to practice deliberately rather than focusing primarily on how your performance would be judged?
10. What practices from Bridgewater, Next Jump, and/or Decurion most intrigued you?
11. Consider Bridgewater’s baseball card (p. 133). Imagine you had a baseball card with your “rely-ons” and “watch-out-fors.” What would be on your card? Would you be interested in getting feedback about the items on your card? Why or why not?
12. Do you have any relationships or activities in your life that provide the support that the Talking Partners or Situational Workshops at Next Jump provide for their employees? If so, what are they? If not, would you value having these sorts of practices in your life?
13. How are meetings at Decurion different from typical meetings? What are the tradeoffs you see, if any, in adopting Decurion’s way of working together as learning communities when they are meeting (regardless of the size or type of meeting)?
14. What are the general qualities of a good “holding environment”? Do you have settings in your life that function for you as a good holding environment? Have you experienced “well-held vulnerability” (p. 154) in any settings?

### *Chapter 5 (“But Is This Any Way to Run a Business?”)*

15. Consider the authors’ analogy on p. 167 between learning at *work* and learning in a *school*. To what extent is this analogy helpful? Would you be willing to take this argument a step further to say that great leaders are like great teachers?

16. How should we define “success” in business? Is the way that indicators of success for Decurion, Bridgewater, and Next Jump are described appealing to you? Why or why not?
17. What is a “developmental pull” (p. 196)? How is this more than merely giving people challenging assignments? Could your organization create more developmental pulls for its people?

#### *Chapter 6 (“Uncovering Your Biggest Blind Spot”)*

18. What is one thing that you would like to get better at? What do you think would happen if you were to become much more public about your intention to grow in this area? How might you enlist others to help you?
19. What reactions, if any, did you have to what Nora Dashwood and Bob Prince shared about themselves in Chapter 6 through their Immunity to Change maps? Did you recognize anything in their maps that reminded you of yourself or anyone you work with closely?
20. Do you know in what ways others who work closely with you would like to grow? If so, how did you come to learn this? When was the last time something *other than your manager* gave you feedback about how you could do someone better related to your work?

#### *Chapter 7 (“Creating Home”)*

##### *Epilogue*

21. Could you see yourself trying out any of the practices in the box on p. 235-36 (“Becoming Deliberately Developmental without a DDO”)?
22. Reread the short poem “The Guest House” by Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi on pp. 286-87. In your life, which “guests” have been the most meaningful in your growth?

#### *A Final Question*

23. What would it look like for discussion groups—like your own book discussion group—to intentionally reflect some of the qualities of a DDO? For example, have you created Home for people to take risks, and would you value this?