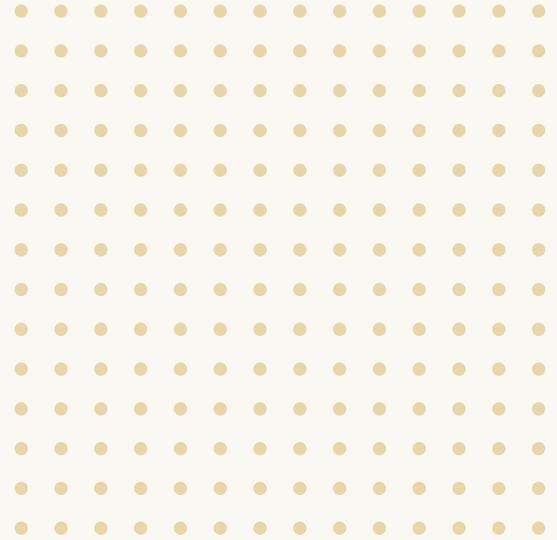


● TOM RATH



BOOK CLUB KIT

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# Life's Great Question

Discover How You Contribute to the World

A discussion guide built around the Create/Operate/Relate framework, with questions for each chapter, team exercises, and prompts for discovering your unique contribution.



# How to Use This Guide

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Life's Great Question challenges us to move beyond 'What do I want?' to ask 'What does the world need from me?' This guide helps your group explore Tom's Create/Operate/Relate framework and discover how each person is wired to contribute.

## **Know Before You Discuss**

Encourage members to think about their own strengths before the first meeting. If possible, take CliftonStrengths or a similar assessment beforehand.

## **The C/O/R Framework**

The book introduces three contribution types: Creators (who generate new ideas), Operators (who build reliable systems), and Relaters (who connect and care for people). Use this language throughout your discussions.

## **Listen for Patterns**

As members share, listen for which contribution style they naturally gravitate toward. Reflect this back to them.

## **Apply It Live**

Challenge each person to practice their contribution style in a specific situation before the next meeting.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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# Discussion Questions



# Reframing the Question

*From 'What do I want?' to 'What can I give?'*

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- 1 Tom opens the book by arguing that 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' is the wrong question. How did that question shape your early career choices?
- 2 When you shift from 'What do I want?' to 'What does the world need from me?', what changes in how you see your work?
- 3 The book suggests that contribution, not achievement, is the path to lasting fulfillment. Do you agree? What is the difference in your experience?
- 4 Think about someone you admire deeply. Is their impact primarily through creating, operating, or relating?
- 5 Tom writes that individualism can become a trap. How have you experienced the tension between pursuing personal success and serving others?
- 6 What is one contribution you make regularly that most people do not see or acknowledge?

# Create, Operate, Relate

## *Discovering your contribution style*

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- 1 After reading about the three styles, which one do you most identify with — Creator, Operator, or Relater? What evidence supports your answer?
- 2 Tom says most people have a primary and secondary style. What is your secondary style, and how does it complement your primary one?
- 3 Think about your current role. Does it allow you to contribute in your natural style, or does it force you into a different mode?
- 4 How might teams perform differently if they intentionally balanced Creators, Operators, and Relaters?
- 5 Can you think of a time when you were operating outside your natural contribution style? How did it feel?
- 6 The book warns against valuing one style over others. Where do you see this bias in your workplace or culture?

# Making Your Contribution Count

*Turning insight into daily action*

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- 1 Tom writes that contribution is not about grand gestures but about showing up consistently. What does 'showing up' look like for you?
- 2 How could you restructure your typical week to spend more time in your contribution zone?
- 3 The book discusses how small acts of contribution compound over time. Can you trace a significant impact back to a small choice you made?
- 4 What gets in the way of you contributing at your best? Is it a time problem, an energy problem, or a clarity problem?
- 5 If you could design your ideal role around your contribution style, what would it look like?
- 6 Tom ends with a challenge: to think about the legacy of your daily actions. What legacy are you currently building, and is it the one you want?



GROUP ACTIVITY

# The Contribution Map

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Each person maps out where they create, operate, and relate in a typical week, then identifies where they feel most alive and most drained.

- Draw three columns on a sheet of paper: CREATE, OPERATE, RELATE.
- List everything you did last week under the column that best fits. Be honest — some tasks may surprise you.
- Star the items where you felt energized and engaged. Circle the items where you felt drained.
- Notice the pattern: Are your starred items clustered in one column? That is likely your contribution sweet spot.
- Share your map with the group. Discuss: How could you shift more of your time toward your starred items?
- As a group, discuss how your different contribution styles could complement each other on a shared project.



PERSONAL REFLECTION

## Journaling Prompts

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*Take time between meetings to reflect on these prompts. Write freely without judgment — these are for your eyes only.*

- 1 Write about the moment in your career when you felt most useful — not most successful, but most useful. What were you doing, and for whom?
- 2 Tom asks: 'What does the world need that you are uniquely equipped to provide?' Write your answer without editing or second-guessing.
- 3 Think about a person who contributed something meaningful to your life without seeking recognition. Write about what they did and how it affected you.
- 4 If you could design your next five years around contribution rather than achievement, what would change?
- 5 Write about the relationship between your strengths and your contribution. How are they connected? Where are they misaligned?
- 6 Imagine reading your own obituary. What contributions would you want listed? Are you on track to create them?



**Thank you for reading.**

Share your experience and connect with other readers

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