

BOOK CLUB GUIDE

# The Impactful Technology Leader

*Pursue Your Purpose to Innovate, Motivate and Inspire*

Chris Caruso

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*For reading groups, leadership development programs, and technology communities*

All author profits from this book are donated to support the next generation of technology professionals.

## About the Book

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The Impactful Technology Leader: Pursue Your Purpose to Innovate, Motivate, and Inspire is grounded in rigorous research, including interviews with award-winning CIOs and CTOs and survey insights from more than 1,600 technology executives across 60+ countries. Drawing on forty years of personal experience leading global technology organizations, Chris Caruso distills the practices that produce meaningful, lasting results.

The book's central argument is that impactful technology leaders prioritize business results and people over technology itself. They do not merely manage systems; they transform their organization from a support function into a strategic powerhouse. And their legacy extends well beyond the organizations they lead.

### The Book's Three Dimensions of Impact

Dimension	Focus	Core Leadership Imperative
<b>The Firm</b>	Driving Innovation	Transform the technology organization from a support function into a strategic powerhouse and a driver of competitive advantage.
<b>The Teams</b>	Building Engagement	Create diverse, motivated, high-performing environments where people do their best work.
<b>The Profession</b>	Inspiring the Next Generation	Expand opportunities and foster inclusive careers for aspiring technology professionals.

### About Chris Caruso

Chris Caruso is an award-winning technology executive with more than forty years of experience leading innovation, transformation, and high-performing global teams. A former CIO and co-inventor of six patents, he led technology organizations recognized for breakthrough innovation and outstanding workplace cultures. Chris currently mentors university students and emerging leaders, advises nonprofits on digital strategy, and writes and speaks about the evolving demands of technology leadership.

## How to Use This Guide

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This guide is structured around the book's three core dimensions of impact: the firm, the team, and the profession. Each section includes discussion questions that connect the research findings and frameworks to your own leadership experience.

### Guide Structure

- Part 1 – The Research Foundation: Questions about the book's methodology and central claims
- Part 2 – Dimension 1 (The Firm): Innovation, strategy, and elevating the tech team's role
- Part 3 – Dimension 2 (The Teams): Building engaged, diverse, high-performing teams
- Part 4 – Dimension 3 (The Profession): Developing the next generation and fostering inclusion
- Part 5 – Synthesis: Connecting all three dimensions as a unified leadership philosophy
- Part 6 – Group Activities & Personal Action Planning

### Facilitator tips:

- Encourage members to identify one finding from each of the three surveys that surprised them most and why.
- Root discussion in personal experience: for each question, ask "when have you seen this in your own organization?"
- The book draws on award-winning CIOs and CTOs. Challenge members to compare their own approaches to the leaders profiled in the book.
- Remind participants that this book is also a call to action, not just a description of what great leaders do, but an invitation to do it.

## Part 1: The Research Foundation

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The Impactful Technology Leader is not a book of opinions; it is grounded in data. The author conducted interviews with award-winning CIOs and CTOs and gathered survey insights from more than 1,600 technology executives across 60+ countries. These questions invite your group to engage with the book's evidence base and examine how research findings map to your own experience.

### Understanding the Research

1. The author conducted three surveys with a total of more than 1,600 technology leaders across 60+ countries. What do you think this global diversity reveals about what it means to be an impactful tech leader? Are the book's insights universal?
2. The research focuses on award-winning CIOs and CTOs. Do you think studying recognized leaders risks overlooking effective leaders who operate without formal recognition? How does the book address this?
3. The author's own career spans four decades and includes a stint as CIO at a global manufacturing company. How does his background shape the book's perspective? What types of organizations or leaders might see their experience reflected differently?

### The Central Argument

4. The book argues that impactful tech leaders prioritize business results and people over technology itself. Is this a genuinely new insight, or is it something the field has understood for some time but struggles to act on? What gets in the way?
5. The author frames the core mission as transforming the tech team from "support function" to "strategic powerhouse." Where does your organization sit on that spectrum? What would the transformation actually require?

## Part 2: The Firm — Driving Innovation

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The first dimension of impact concerns how technology leaders create value for their organizations. The author draws on CIO 100 award-winning examples (including his own work at PPG) to illustrate what it takes for a technology organization to move from operational support to competitive advantage. These questions explore innovation leadership, business partnership, and strategic positioning.

### Elevating The Technology Organization's Role

6. The author argues that the tech organization must be seen, and must see itself, as a strategic partner, not a service department. How does that shift actually happen? Who needs to change: technology leaders, business partners, or both?
7. The book draws on examples of organizations winning CIO 100 awards for innovative use of technology. Think of a technology initiative at your organization (past or current) that created a genuine competitive advantage. What made it possible? What almost stopped it?
8. What is the most significant obstacle to a technology organization being recognized as a driver of innovation in your organization? Is it a people problem, a structure problem, or a perception problem?

### Leading Innovation

9. How do you personally define innovation in a technology context? Does the author's framing align with yours, or does it challenge your definition?
10. The author led technology teams that were recognized twice as some of the best places to work in IT. What link does the book make between employee experience and the organization's ability to innovate?
11. The book argues that technology leaders must move beyond reactive problem-solving to create meaningful, proactive change. How do day-to-day operational demands make this difficult? What strategies does the book offer, and do they feel achievable?

### Communicating Tech Value to the Business

12. One persistent challenge for technology leaders is making the value of technology investments legible to non-technical executives. What does the author recommend? How does this compare to your own experience?
13. Have you ever had to advocate for an innovation initiative that was initially dismissed or underfunded? What did it take to shift the conversation?

## Part 3: The Team — Building Exceptional Workplaces

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The second dimension examines how impactful technology leaders are in building environments that allow diverse, motivated teams to thrive. The research conducted for the book surfaces practices that consistently distinguish high-engagement technology organizations from those that struggle with attrition, dysfunction, or low performance.

### Culture and Engagement

**14.** The book identifies creating environments where diverse, motivated teams thrive as a defining characteristic of impactful tech leaders. What does "diverse and motivated" mean in practice in your organization, and where are the gaps?

**15.** The leaders in this portion of the book led teams that Computerworld recognized as among the "Best Places to Work in IT." What does that recognition signal about organizational culture, and what does it miss?

**16.** The book draws on interviews with award-winning leaders to surface what makes technology workplaces exceptional. What patterns did you find most compelling? What felt most transferable to your own organization?

### Leadership as Multiplier

**17.** The author describes impactful leaders as those who make their organizations, teams, and profession better, not just during their tenure, but beyond it. What are your thoughts on your own leadership legacy? Do you find that concept helpful, or does it seem too early to consider?

**18.** What is the most important thing a technology leader can do to develop the people on their team? Does the book's answer align with yours?

**19.** The research draws on leaders who have navigated rapid change and innovation over multiple decades. How do long-tenured leaders balance institutional knowledge with the risk of stagnation?

### Navigating Challenges

**20.** Leading technology organizations through rapid change is a recurring theme in the book. What practices does the book identify for maintaining team cohesion and morale during periods of significant disruption?

**21.** The author describes fostering cultures of collaboration and growth. What is the hardest part of building a genuinely collaborative culture in a tech organization? Have you seen it done well?

## Part 4: The Profession — The Next Generation

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The third dimension may be the most distinctive aspect of The Impactful Technology Leader. The author argues that truly impactful leaders extend their responsibility beyond their firm and their team to the technology profession itself; mentoring emerging talent, fostering inclusive careers, and ensuring that the next generation of technology professionals has access to opportunity.

### Responsibility to the Profession

**23.** The book calls on technology leaders to expand opportunities for aspiring professionals. What does that responsibility look like in practice for someone at your career stage? What are you already doing, and what could you do more of?

**24.** The book highlights leaders who invest in the future of the technology profession by serving as mentors, participating on advisory boards, and even creating nonprofit STEM and apprenticeship programs. Which of these forms of giving back aligns most closely with your own strengths and interests?

### Inclusion and Access

**25.** The book frames fostering inclusive technology careers as a leadership imperative, not a nice-to-have. Do you agree?

**26.** Think about the technology leaders who had the greatest positive influence on your career. What did they do, specifically, that made a difference? How does that compare to what the author describes in his research?

**27.** Who is not in the room in most technology leadership conversations today? What does the author argue leaders should do about it?

### Long-Term Impact

**28.** The book argues that great leaders create an impact that extends far beyond their tenure. How do you evaluate a technology leader's long-term impact? What metrics matter, and what can't be measured?

## Part 5: Synthesis — Pursuing Your Purpose

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The book's subtitle, *Pursue Your Purpose*, is not incidental. The author frames impact as purposeful rather than accidental. These final discussion questions invite your group to synthesize the three dimensions and connect the book's argument to your own leadership identity.

### The Whole Framework

**29.** The Impactful Technology Leader organizes impact across three dimensions: the firm, the team, and the profession. Which dimension do you feel strongest in? Which requires the most deliberate development for you personally?

**30.** The book is described as both a "guide and call to action." What specific call to action did you hear most clearly as you read? What has prompted you to reconsider?

**31.** The author's framework is grounded in the behaviors of award-winning leaders. Does studying exemplary leaders help you improve, or does it risk making the gap between your current practice and the ideal seem too large to close?

### Purpose and Identity

**32.** What does it mean to "pursue your purpose" as a technology leader? How does the author define purpose, and how does your definition compare?

**33.** The book argues that the most impactful leaders focus on business results and people over technology. For those of us who entered technology careers because of a genuine passion for tech, does that reorientation ever feel like a loss? How does the book handle that tension?

**34.** If a technology leader who read this book ten years ago came back to check on their progress, what questions would you want them to be able to answer with confidence?

## Part 6: Group Activities

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### Activity 1: Three-Dimension Self-Assessment (20 minutes)

- Each person rates themselves 1–5 on all three of the book’s dimensions: The Firm, The Teams, The Profession.
- Share scores and discuss: Which dimension gets the most of your attention? Which gets the least?
- Discuss: What would it mean for your leadership profile if you invested equally in all three?

### Activity 2: The Award-Winning Initiative (25 minutes)

- Think of a technology initiative from your career that you're proud of. Describe it in 2 minutes.
- The group then maps it to the book’s three dimensions: did it impact the firm? the team? the profession?
- Discuss: What kind of 'award' would this have won, and what does that reveal about where you create impact?

### Activity 3: The 1,600 Leaders Question (20 minutes)

- The author’s research surveyed 1,600+ technology leaders globally. If you were one of them, what would you have said are the most critical factors for technology leadership success?
- Each person writes 3 answers independently, then shares with the group.
- Compare your collective answers to what the book found: where do you align? Where do you diverge?

### Activity 4: Your Profession Commitment (15 minutes)

- The book’s third dimension is about giving back to the profession.
- Each person names one specific action they will take in the next 90 days to invest in the next generation, such as mentoring, speaking to aspiring technology professionals, or volunteering time to support a STEM organization.
- Share commitments with the group and agree to check in with each other at the next meeting.

## Personal Action Planning

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The Impactful Technology Leader is a call to action. The most valuable outcome of your reading is a change in behavior. Use these prompts, aligned to the book’s three dimensions, to translate insight into practice.

### **Their Firm — What will I do differently as a strategic leader?**

- One way I will more actively position the tech team as a driver of innovation in my organization:
- One business relationship I will invest in to strengthen our team's strategic relevance:
- One initiative I have been avoiding that could create a real competitive advantage:

### **Their Teams — What will I do differently as a people leader?**

- One practice I will adopt to build a more engaged, inclusive team environment:
- One person on my team I will invest in more deliberately:
- One thing I will stop doing that is limiting my team's potential:

### **Their Profession — What will I do for the next generation?**

- One way I will expand access or opportunity for an emerging technology professional:
- One form of mentoring, sponsoring, or advocacy I will commit to in the next 90 days:
- One thing I learned from this book that I will pass on to someone earlier in their career:

Accountability partner: Share your three commitments with someone in this reading group. Reconnect in 60 days to report on your progress.

*Impactful technology leaders don't just build systems;  
they strengthen their firms, elevate their teams, and shape their profession.*

— The Impactful Technology Leader, Chris Caruso

[impactfultechologyleader.com](http://impactfultechologyleader.com)