

Lessons in Leadership Discussion Guide: Kurt Carlson

Lessons in Leadership is a series where Dr. Kent Nelson, Center for Leadership and Social Responsibility Leadership Faculty Fellow, conducts interviews with community leaders to share insights and lessons with Milgard students and the greater community.

[Watch](#) the interview with Kurt Carlson, CEO of Propel Insurance, to hear valuable leadership wisdom shared from the field. This discussion guide is designed to dive deeper into the themes addressed in the interview and beyond, including culture change, strategies as an effective leader, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

1. How can an employer balance their commitment to employees, shareholders, and community stakeholders in a meaningful way?
2. What were some of the strategies Kurt Carlson uses to be an effective leader? Have you recognized any of these strategies in leaders that you know?
3. “You have to get to a place where people feel safe telling you the truth and that truth won’t come back to them as a weapon.” How does this type of listening help an organization or business thrive?
4. What does an inclusive organization or business look like? Brainstorm some characteristics. Which characteristics that you listed are based in the culture of the organization and which are operational (policies, programs, pay, structure)? How do the operations of an organization influence the culture?
5. Kurt Carlson advises that you “have to believe in what you’re doing but you can’t be so rigid in your ideas that you can’t change or alter your view of the world a little bit. None of us have that perfect view.” How can organizations use this mentality to center diversity, equity, and inclusion?
6. Kurt Carlson’s talks about how there are people in “every business” that push others down rather than viewing the company as a team. Have you seen this in your own life? In what ways does competition and individualism help or hurt an organization?
7. Do you think it is important for companies and organizations to prioritize community service and social responsibility? Why or why not?