

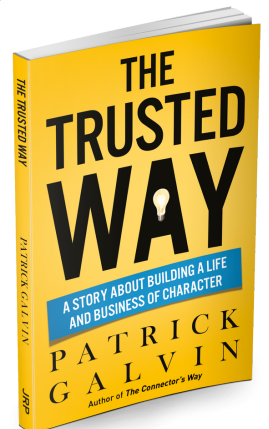
THE TRUSTED WAY

The Four-Way Test of the things we think, say, or do

1. Is it the **TRUTH**?
2. Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?
3. Will it build **GOODWILL** and **BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?
4. Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned?

Herbert J. Taylor created The Four-Way Test in 1932 to save his company. Rotary International adopted it as one of its guiding principles in 1943. Today, organizations and individuals worldwide use it as an ethical measuring stick.

From *The Trusted Way* by Patrick Galvin
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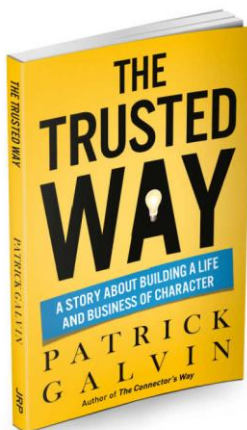
THE TRUSTED WAY: A DISCUSSION GUIDE

Building a Life and Business of Character

What constitutes ethical business behavior? What does it mean to do the right thing? In a fast-paced world that regularly stretches the limits of truth and fairness, it is tempting to look for shortcuts. But there are no quick paths to achieving lasting fame or fortune. The only sure way to personal and professional success is to develop and nurture solid relationships that are grounded in trust.

Written by Patrick Galvin, *The Trusted Way: A Story About Building a Life and Business of Character* (Joseph Rudolph Publishers) is the story of Brad Parsons and the unexpected mentors he meets on his journey from morally challenged entrepreneur to trusted advisor and friend. Along the way, he learns about **The Four-Way Test**, a simple yet powerful yardstick that measures the impact of a person's thoughts, words, and deeds toward others: 1. Is it the TRUTH? 2. Is it FAIR to all concerned? 3. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS? 4. Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

Whether you've purchased a copy for yourself or are reading it as part of a book club or group exercise, *The Trusted Way* is a compelling and accessible guide for building stronger relationships and making the world a better place. The discussion guide on the following pages will get you thinking about trust and provide you with ideas for incorporating the principles of The Four-Way Test into your work and life.



The Trusted Way: A Story About Building a Life and Business of Character by Patrick Galvin (Joseph Rudolph Publishers) is available in paperback, Kindle and audio formats on Amazon.

For volume quantity discounts for your group or organization, please contact info@galvanizinggroup.com.

QUESTION ONE

Is it the TRUTH?

The Four-Way Test does not provide answers but rather asks questions. The first one, “Is it the truth?”, is short but it is far from simple. Herbert J. Taylor, who drafted The Four-Way Test in 1932, made the following observation: “I never realized before how far I often was from the truth and how many untruths appeared in our company’s literature, letters, and advertising.” After taking a closer look at his own business, he instructed his advertising manager to remove all unsubstantiated superlatives (e.g., *best*, *greatest*, *finest*, etc.) from the company’s promotional materials. From there, sales grew steadily—even in the depths of the Great Depression.¹

Information and Interpretation

People often confuse truth and facts, but they are not the same. Facts are objective pieces of information that can be observed, verified, and proven. While facts provide a foundation for understanding truth, truth itself is a broader concept that can include cultural differences, interpretations, and personal beliefs.

Factors to Consider

When evaluating the accuracy or truthfulness of information, there are several factors to consider:

1. **Context:** Are you fully aware of the surrounding circumstances in which the information is being provided? If you lack complete information or assess a situation without considering the broader context, you may be misinformed.
2. **Evidence and Sources:** Are your information sources trustworthy and reputable? Be wary of claims that are not backed by evidence. Instead, seek out diverse and unconnected sources that corroborate the same details. This ensures a more accurate and well-rounded understanding of the subject.

¹ The story of Herbert J. Taylor and the creation of The Four-Way Test can be found in *The Trusted Way*. You can also read Taylor’s first-hand account in *The Herbert J. Taylor Story* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1968).

3. Logical Coherence: Does the information flow logically? Do the sequence of events or arguments make sense? Be cautious of inconsistencies, contradictions, arguments, or opinions that don't align with established principles and recognized events.
4. Bias and Intent: Reflect on the motivation of the sources or individuals conveying the information. Are they trying to advance a particular agenda or perspective? Are they trying to evoke an emotional reaction? Emotional manipulation can lead to a distortion of the truth.

Remain Open to Different Perspectives

As Herbert J. Taylor discovered, there is no single or “universal” truth that covers all bases. Instead, evaluating truthfulness is an ongoing process that requires critical thinking, healthy skepticism, and a willingness not only to remain open to other perspectives but also to reassess your conclusions based on new information.

Discussion:

How do you decide whether something is true or not?

QUESTION TWO

Is it FAIR to all concerned?

"It's not fair!"

Children love this phrase. They use it when they feel like they are being treated differently or if they think that others are getting preferential treatment. They use it to express frustration, disappointment, or anger at being left out. It is a way for them to voice their feelings (often loudly) and draw attention to a situation they consider unjust.

Fairness vs. Equality

Fortunately, children's understanding of fairness evolves as they grow and mature. They begin to grasp that fairness, unlike equality, doesn't necessarily mean treating everyone exactly the same. Instead, fairness is about considering individual differences or unique circumstances to arrive at an appropriate outcome. Fairness recognizes that individuals have varying needs or starting points and may need different levels of support.

Ensuring Fairness

So, how do you evaluate a situation from all angles to ensure fair treatment for everyone? Think of it as a puzzle. First, gather the puzzle pieces. These are the different perspectives, concerns, and needs of all parties. Examine each piece closely and try to envision the big picture. Lay the puzzle pieces out and look for patterns. Do some pieces fit together better than others? Pay attention to gaps or pieces that don't match up.

As you assemble your puzzle, be aware of any biases or assumptions that affect how you think the finished piece should look. Check in with the people involved, too. Listen to their thoughts and feelings and consider their individual circumstances. Their input may be the missing puzzle piece that you are looking for.

Lastly, take a step back and admire the whole picture. Does it feel balanced and complete? Did you make a good-faith effort to consider the perspectives of everyone involved? Once you are satisfied,

let people know your process and how you arrived at your decision. By maintaining complete transparency, you minimize the potential for conflict and help ensure that your decisions are objective.

Acting Fair-Minded

Admittedly, making a decision that you think is fair doesn't mean that everyone will be pleased. But people should know that you evaluated things from all angles and were empathetic to all perspectives (and that you are open to revisiting your decision if new information emerges). It is by treating individuals equitably, i.e., considering their unique circumstances rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach, that you establish yourself as a fair-minded individual.

Discussion:

Who is the most fair-minded person you know? What can this person teach you about fairness and trust?

QUESTION THREE

Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?

In business, goodwill refers to the intangible value or reputation that a company has developed over time. Goodwill is not a physical asset like equipment or real estate, but it can significantly impact a company's overall value. It is the positive perception and recognition that a business enjoys among customers, employees, suppliers, and investors. A company that honors its commitments, delivers ethically, and shows social responsibility accumulates valuable goodwill.

Outside of business, most people define goodwill as acts of kindness or generosity. It reflects a genuine desire to make a positive impact on individuals or communities and manifests in various ways, from small gestures of support to larger philanthropic efforts aimed at improving the well-being of others. At its core, goodwill embodies the principles that people use to nurture deep and meaningful friendships. (Notably, The Four-Way Tests talks about building BETTER friendships, not MORE friendships. A person can have thousands of friends on social media but not feel genuinely connected to any of them.) Solid connections, i.e., better friendships, are sources of emotional support. They also unlock the doors to greater career opportunities, as people who care for each other are more open to exchanging ideas and making valuable introductions.

Intangible Qualities

You cannot get an exact measurement of goodwill, just as you cannot measure the precise value of a friendship. So how do you know if either one exists? Goodwill is reflected in the reputation you've built, and the way people perceive and speak of you to others. The value of friendship lies in the experiences that you share and the support that you receive. Both goodwill and friendships are rooted in trust, and have a positive impact on your interactions and outcomes.

Discussion:

What does building goodwill and better friendships mean to you?

QUESTION FOUR

Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

At first pass, question two ("Is it fair to all concerned?") seems remarkably similar to question four ("Will it be beneficial to all concerned?"). However, when it comes to deciding about the right thing to do, they each look at a different aspect of the equation.

"Is it fair to all concerned?" is about treating people justly. It is about making sure that no one gets a better deal because of who they are or who they know. This question reminds us to avoid showing favoritism and to ensure that our decisions don't hurt some people more than others.

On the other hand, "Will it be beneficial to all concerned?" considers whether a decision will lead to good results for everyone involved. For Herbert J. Taylor, author of *The Four-Way Test*, it meant removing negative comments about competitors from his company's marketing literature and advertising campaigns. It is a question that asks us to consider whether everyone will end up better off because of the choices we make. In doing so, it pushes us to think about the bigger picture and the impact our decisions might have on people's lives.

Different Sides of the Coin

While both questions are about doing the right thing, one is about fairness while the other is about making things better for everyone. To decide if something is beneficial to all concerned, you must first identify potential stakeholders and examine how each might be affected. A decision that benefits one group at the expense of another isn't truly beneficial to all concerned.

A long-term perspective is crucial, too. You need to assess the potential consequences of your decision over time because something that might seem beneficial in the short term could have negative implications in the future. Ethical considerations also play a significant role. A decision that adheres to values such as fairness, justice, and respect for human rights contributes positively to the larger context and is more likely to stand the test of time.

Finally, a decision that is beneficial to all concerned is one in which everyone gains something without anyone losing out. One way to create value for all parties is through collaborative problem-solving, in which everyone is encouraged to share their perspectives, concerns, and objectives. Collaborators work together to find middle ground, where concessions are made without sacrificing core interests. In the end, collaboration goes beyond mere cooperation. It involves building a collective mindset that values mutual growth and success. By encouraging collaborative problem-solving, you help create an environment of trust, respect, and understanding.

A Thoughtful and Holistic Approach

Deciding whether something is beneficial for everyone requires careful thought and a strong commitment to doing what's right. You need to consider the different desires of people involved and how things will unfold over time. It's about discussing matters openly and finding solutions that suit everyone, while also building stronger relationships and paving the way for future teamwork.

Discussion:

How can you ensure that your decisions and choices will benefit others?