

# What is a Doubt Club?

*A secret, anonymous meeting format, in which powerful people can share their ethical doubts about their life's work.*

There are four stages to a doubt club meeting: First, the reading of some principles about anonymity, etc. Second, one or more exercises about setting scope or confessing doubts. Third, an opportunity for heart-to-heart conversations between pairs of participants. And finally pledges to follow up with one another.

- Many people have contributed to these ideas: Tristan Harris, Albert Alexander, Levi Felix, Albert Kong, and Aza Raskin.

## Goals

1. *Safe space.* To maintain a space in which the leaders of the tech world feel they can let their guard down and admit existential doubts, moral quandries, and data points which would be disastrous to admit publicly.
2. *High quality, drop-in experience.* To create a highly structured, well-facilitated, unconventional environment that extremely busy people feel is a good use of their time for an hour and a half a month.
3. *Changes company strategies.* By encouraging contemplation and sharing among leaders, to precipitate pivots in companies, products, and career trajectories that leave things more thoughtful and better for the world.

## Reading of Principles

*This is not a complete set!*

1. We're not trying to find solutions, tonight, we're trying to ask difficult questions. Ask don't tell
2. Let's potentially discard our roles, be aware of roles
3. This is something we do as people
4. Complete anon. "we have each other as witnesses. "

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## Scope Setting and Confessions Activities

### Approach #1, Progressive Questions

asking progressively more intense questions: 1) how do uninformed critics complain about your impact?; (2) How does a smart layperson?; (3) How would a reporter with full NDA access to your employees?; (4) What would you feel ashamed to reveal about your co?; (5) What is your

most exploitative revenue stream? (6) What is the least humane/human way your mission statement could reasonably be reframed?

It might be nice to sort answers into three categories: \*worried about\*, \*hopeless/ignoring\*, and \*acceptable costs\*. We also thought it might be best to do the exercise split into two groups of six and then combine.

### **Approach #2, Circle Confessions**

You sit in a circle, go around 3x, first time everyone shares a doubt about their product, second time their company mission or metric, third time their life mission / career

### **Approach #3, Written Confessions**

Participants split into groups of four, writing out privately the product impact and mission mismatch issues they're most hopeless about, and then deciding whether to discuss them with their peers.

If they decide to share their issue, they get a few minutes to talk about it without interruption, and then they can optionally elect the person to their left to interview about it for a few minutes to gather more information. At the end of their turn you can tell your group whether you're willing to be approached later in the evening with ideas for how they could approach the issue.

### **Approach #4, Hopeless But Worth Considering**

A quadrant is drawn on a whiteboard. Hopeless → Hopeful and Dumb → Worth Strategizing. Players call out world issues or concerns that the others are familiar with. The group decides where on the graph they belong. If a concern feels hopeless for those in the room, but also seems worth strategizing about by those in the room, the speaker gets a point. Members are encouraged to use the phrase: *"I believe that's not dumb."*

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### **Heart to Hearts**

Each player takes one or more "concerns" from the previous board and hosts a series of short meetings about them.

### **Followups**

Each doubt club attendee has a "sponsor", the person who invited them, who follows up on their experience and sets up a conversation with a member.

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### **Invitation text**

Entrepreneurs face daily or weekly social challenges—needing to fire people, reorganize companies, reorient around bad news and surprises, occasionally board and investor politics—that others would put off. But that doesn't mean that entrepreneurs don't have things they're putting off. Often there are kinds of bad news that we feel hopeless about or would prefer not to think about. For instance, bad news about our products' impacts on end users, or about how what we've made relates to the mission we believe in. Often there is no room to have these discussions in the company or on the board, because the less likely it is that something has a clear, actionable solution and a way forward, the worse it is for morale to discuss it.