

A Guide to Human Citizenship: The ALF Way

A special selection of excerpts from the forthcoming
book by American Leadership Forum Silicon Valley. |

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— The Principle —

Embrace Civic Responsibility

“Citizens have power. Customers have needs.”

—Peter Block

A senior executive was being interviewed for the ALF Fellows program. When asked where he lived, he shared the name of a wealthy town in Northern California, which had recently been in the news for a slew of attacks by residents on elected officials. The city had been moving an initiative forward to promote equity, inclusion and belonging for its citizens. For that, as well as some COVID safety policies, leaders had been on the receiving end of vicious name calling at public meetings, ongoing harassment, damage to their property, threats of physical harm and a home break-in.

When asked his opinion about what was going on at City Hall, he responded with, “I don’t pay attention to the news. I let my wife worry about that.” This executive happened to be a person of color. Imagine how he might have felt if it were his wife on the receiving end of the racial harassment. Have we stopped paying attention to what’s going on in our own backyard?

Evidence of declining trust between our government and its citizens has been well documented. When the Pew Research Center began asking about trust in government in 1958, about three-quarters of Americans trusted the federal government to do the right thing almost always or most of the time. Trust in government began eroding during the 1960s, amid the escalation of the Vietnam War, and the decline continued in the 1970s with the Watergate scandal and worsening economic struggles. The 80s and 90s brought periods of higher trust, after 9/11 for instance, but since 2007, that figure has not risen above 30%.

It’s only logical that distrust and a

**We have a choice
to lead with love
and curiosity.**

lack of civic engagement are linked. How much do we as unengaged citizens bear the responsibility for poor quality candidates, thoughtless decisions and broken trust with the citizenry? If we choose to stay ignorant or “let someone else worry about that,” we don’t have room to complain, as they say.

Another potential Fellow who worked in tech expressed an interest in serving as a city parks commissioner for her small town. She was passionate about public space and ensuring that kids have adequate places to move and socialize. When a faction in the town learned that she was in favor of transforming an open space into a public park, the harassment began; escalating threats and name calling on social media. Widely advertising her home address. Calling on residents to bother her there to dissuade her advocacy for building a park. The heat became too troubling, as a mom and as someone who already held a more than full-time career with substantial, time consuming pressures. Who needs it?! She withdrew her application to be a city commissioner.

Is this politics as usual now? Why? What is the opportunity before us as human citizens, in this moment in our community and country? Is it someone else’s job to know who the Mayor is, where the money goes, and why potholes

aren’t filled or school board members are getting death threats for enforcing mask mandates during a pandemic? It begs the question - Whose democracy is this anyway?!

We have a choice to lead with love and curiosity – not only at home and work, but as contributing members of our neighborhoods and communities. The call to action here is to stay informed, ask questions, and care. We may need to manage our intake of news to protect our hearts and mental health, but choosing to disengage and instead make assumptions and point fingers can’t be the alternative if we’re to sustain our democracy.

We’ve witnessed seasoned leaders begin the Fellows program as private sector executives, and come out the other side running for office or joining a non-profit board. Why? When Fellows invest in relationship building across sectors, build trust and have authentic dialogue with leaders they otherwise may have prejudged and made assumptions about, a systems view of civic challenges begins to take shape. We begin to understand our complicity to problems, and the opportunity before us to engage in solutions.

INVITATION:

- With a “beginner’s mind,” have a conversation with someone in the public sector. Interview them about their work and challenges, with the goal of exposing your assumptions. Have you been complicit in perpetuating them? How?
- Explore ways to contribute civically. If you can’t take the time, at least seek to understand the systems.
- Vote. Every. Single. Time. |

The ALF Magic Formula: Transformation to the Power of Trust

The Equation the World Needs

By Keith Krach, ALF Silicon Valley Class XV

I grew up in Rocky River, Ohio, where my dad ran a machine shop. I worked for him as a welder. In good times, he had five employees; in tough times, I was his only one. My father encouraged me to get some “college knowledge,” and come back as an engineer so we could build a big company of 10 employees. While I did become an engineer, I never went back to work with my dad. But I believe he would have been proud of my career and my involvement in the American Leadership Forum.

At ALF, we aren't allied with any political causes or specific ideologies. Instead, we support the United Nations Human Rights Declaration of 1948, which states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. This principle guides our work and values.

My life's work has been to create innovative companies, high-performance teams, and massive global networks based on trust. I believe the team with the best people wins—and that diversity of thought and experience is the catalyst for genius. That is why ALF's mission resonates so deeply with me. It revolves around forging networks of leaders who establish bonds of good faith, all with the aim of effecting change for the greater good. In essence, ALF is about two words: Transformation and Trust.

At the ALF Class XV retreat, we explored the many concrete ways that trust is the key to fortifying and expanding relationships, organizations, businesses, and noble quests. Trust is also essential to self-transformation. If you

want to supercharge your team, you must first trust yourself to lead. You have to look at yourself honestly and say: Can I trust my mind and my intentions? Can I trust that I'm acting not out of ego but with clarity, compassion, and integrity?

We concluded that trust is integral to all transformations. Being an engineer, I turned this into a single equation, which also serves as a memory aid whenever I lose focus.

Transformation to the Power of Trust, or simply T2.

PROOF OF THE T2 EQUATION
- Transformation is the most powerful word in any language. Without it, we don't develop, prosper, or grow. If you're not transforming, you're dying—and the best way to control the future is to invent it.

My own transformational journey has been characterized by dramatic risk-taking. I didn't plan it this way, but every few years, I begin again, entering a whole new world with a new wheelhouse, vocabulary, cast of characters, and set of challenges—and of course brand new ways to fail. By living at my edge, and at the edge of massive cultural disruptions, has forced my heart and mind to grow. I truly believe the biggest risk of all is that we stop taking risks at all. One saying I like is “Don't be too careful; you might get hurt.”

Many of the leaders I admire most have a more prudent style. They transform incrementally, gathering information and testing-and-learning before changing course. Their transformations come into focus slowly,

but they can be every bit as radical and profound as a risk-taker's change. What I know for sure is that great leaders embrace change—and not just change, but wholesale change. Transformation.

That brings me to the second component in our T2 equation: TRUST. If Transformation is the most powerful word in any language, then Trust is the most important word.

When starting companies from scratch, I quickly found that my partners and teams had to be willing to take a flier on me. That's a lot to ask—but it's not something I'd ever take for granted. To earn trust is simple but not easy: First, I gut-check my own integrity at every turn. I do trustworthy acts. I keep my promises. I overdeliver. On the strength of my track record, people trust me the next time—and I trust them.

This principle drove me in the 1980s, when, as an upstart at GM, the company trusted me to build its industrial robots division, and I turned GMF into the largest manufacturer of industrial robots in the world.

It served me again in the 1990's at Rasna when engineers who tested our design software came to trust it with their most important calculations. It forever changed the way they work. And trust was central to building Ariba 20 years ago and inventing B2B commerce. Ariba now transacts \$3.7T/year—more than Amazon, eBay, and Alibaba combined.

At DocuSign, it became crystal clear that we were not in the software business, we were in the trust business.

DocuSign deals with people's most important contracts and relationships—the documents you sign. Our software is rock-solid, but our word is gold.

Today, the company name is a verb, and the DocuSign Global Trust Network has grown to 1 billion users and 1 million companies.

All of this was possible because of the trust I extended to others, and the trust they put in me. I have found that the shared values of trust define us more than our differences and that those shared principles can see us through our challenges. When trust is in abundance, everyone grows and prospers. When it's scarce, everyone suffers.

Unfortunately, the world now has some authoritarian leaders who don't grasp that point. They operate on networks of deceit and duplicity. But their attempts to manipulate our bonds of trust always incurs a heavy price: the loss of trust. It's ironic that even those who undermine trust need it. That is its undeniable power. No one in a globally interdependent world can survive without it.

A DREAM I NEVER KNEW I HAD - In December 2017, when I was running DocuSign, I went on a two-week listening trip to explore whether to enter the Chinese market. I have been visiting China since 1981 and am a lover of Chinese culture, history, and people. But this time it was different. First, it seemed odd that every 30 minutes at a conference I was being asked to download Tencent. Then it became clear the nonstop propaganda of the CCP was edged with new aggression. The surveillance state was using technology that the worst of history's dictators could have only dreamed of. I saw drone swarm technology. I heard about the One Belt One Road. It looked like a military supply chain to me.

In plain sight, the CCP was also carrying out horrific human rights abuses to ethnically cleanse the Uyghur population in the western province of Xinjiang.

In my business, the guys with the best technology win the war. And the CCP has malign intentions. As I was flying home, I wondered what the leaders in Washington were doing about this.

I only knew one government official: Vice President Mike Pence, whom I

met in passing when he was governor of Indiana, and I was the chairman of the board at Purdue. After I shared my concerns about China with him, the Vice President asked: "Have you ever thought about serving your country?"

I found myself saying: "That's a dream I never knew I had. I'd be honored."

Little did I know that the trust the U.S. government put in me at that moment was going to lead to the most important mission of my life. I was asked to serve as Under Secretary of State, and lead economic diplomacy for the United States.

I may have been new to government, but I fully appreciated the enormity of the role of "the E" in a time when the U.S. is facing accelerating cyberwarfare and ruthless techno-economic competition. Our rivals are playing the long game and they are playing for keeps.

In this high-stakes competition, a superpower advantage can vanish in an instant. To gain a competitive advantage over authoritarian rivals I set out to unify our powerful allies, to leverage the private sector, and to amplify the

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moral high ground of democratic trust principles.

DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT: CATALYST FOR GENIUS - I have always prided myself on being a nonpartisan CEO, open to diversity of thought and immune to tempest-in-a-teapot controversies. So it was a badge of honor to have the rare distinction of being unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate, especially at a time of heightened polarization.

Popular wisdom is that if you want a friend in Washington, you should get a dog. We already had one, so I brought a dozen brilliant veterans to D.C. from DocuSign, Ariba, Rasna, GM, and XO Jet. I even recruited Purdue's Dean of Engineering, Mung Chiang who was recently named President of the University.

I paired them with foreign service officers in a synergistic team backed by 3,000 economic officers in the U.S. and every country around the world. We had the finest foreign service folk, and their North Star is always national security.

However, one experience they hadn't had was one I knew well: getting bloody on the battlefield of technological competition. The combination of the Silicon Valley veterans and the elite diplomatic corps proved extraordinary. I called it a 60/60 deal, because both parties not only respected but learned so much from each other.

We went to work aligning the team around a playbook—mission, vision, principles, goals, and strategy. The playbook would become the U.S. Global Economic Security Strategy (GESS). Among other goals, it lays out a plan to form a network of partnerships composed of like-minded entities that operate by a set of trust principles that are now called the Trust Doctrine.

THE TRUST DOCTRINE - The Trust Doctrine states that every peaceful relationship must be based on a firm foundation of integrity, accountability, transparency, and reciprocity. A peaceful relationship must further demonstrate respect for the rule of law, property rights, national sovereignty, the environment, the press, and human rights.

These are principles that the U.S. and our partners honor, while authoritarian regimes like China

and Russia flout them, and use our capacity for trust against us. In fact, the China-Russia partnership lays bare an opposite doctrine to ours: call it the Power Doctrine. Both governments are revolutionary relics known for lawlessness, duplicity, bullying, domestic oppression, thought control, coercive economic practices, and grave human-rights abuses. They dismiss the possibility of relationships built on trust, and instead rely on coercion to achieve their ambitions.

The Trust Doctrine, by contrast, puts a shared commitment to human dignity at the heart of international relations. It offers mutual and symmetrical benefits to those who align with the principles and extend them to others. We turn the tables on the Power Doctrine when we draw a bright line between trust relationships and power relationships. This gives our side the moral high ground, and a position of strength and solidarity from which to compete.

CLEAN NETWORK ALLIANCE OF DEMOCRACIES - We put the Trust Doctrine to the test on one of the most urgent threats from an authoritarian regime: China's plan to control global 5G communications.

If China controlled 5G today, the CCP would not only have access to every single cell phone's personal data, but they could manipulate everything from utility grids to autonomous vehicles, sanitation systems, power grids, and manufacturing processes. When I arrived at the State Department, the CCP's 5G masterplan seemed unstoppable. All previous U.S. efforts to stop them had failed. Both sides of the aisle were hitting the panic button.

Our breakthrough came when we asked our foreign counterparts a simple question: How's your relationship with the CCP? They invariably said, "They're an important trading partner." But then they'd lean in: "...but we don't trust them."

Understanding that the CCP was running empty on trust gave us the confidence to deploy the Trust Doctrine to both defeat the 5G masterplan and to create an enduring model by building the Clean Network Alliance of Democracies, which would defend against all of the CCP's techno-economic weaponry.

The Trust Doctrine cracked the

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code. In less than a year, and during the worst period of the pandemic, the Clean Network grew to 60 Clean Countries, as we called them. The Clean Countries represent two thirds of the world's global GDP, two hundred Clean Telcos, and a host of industry-leading Clean Companies.

Former U.S. National Security Advisor General H.R. McMaster said, "The Clean Network's defeat of the Chinese Communist Party's masterplan to control 5G communications was the first time a U.S. government-led initiative proved that China's economic warfare is beatable because it exposed their biggest weakness: Nobody trusts them."

PRESERVING DEMOCRACY IN TAIWAN - Taiwan is a linchpin of democracy and a role model of freedom. Its survival is vital to the wellbeing of democracies all over the world. The Trust Doctrine became the fulcrum of our efforts to shield Taiwan from the CCP's aggression. We used it to strengthen Taiwan's economic ties to the U.S. and our allies.

To Xi Jinping, Taiwan's existence as an extraordinarily vibrant Mandarin-speaking society disproves the CCP myth that democracy is incompatible with Chinese culture. He wants it gone. Our support of Taiwan is the Trust Doctrine in action.

Two groundbreaking initiatives, the Lee Economic Prosperity Partnership and the Science and Technology Cooperation Pact, served to strengthen a trusting, respectful relationship between Taiwan and the nations of the free world. Our team also brought the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), the world's leader in advanced semiconductor fabrication, to the U.S., in the largest onshoring in our nation's history.

I got the feeling that Beijing officials were a little upset with me for deepening Taiwan's democratic alliances because they sent a greeting party of 40 fighters and bombers when I became the highest-ranking State Department official to visit Taiwan in 41 years.

However, I knew the trip was worthwhile when Taiwan's President Tsai said my visit exemplified the remarkable possibilities of the Taiwan-US alliance, which has only grown stronger since that trip. Taiwan's U.S. ambassador even dubbed me, "Taiwan's number one friend."

PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS

The Trust Doctrine served as a prominent voice both to call out the CCP's genocide of the Uyghurs and to take concrete action to confront it.

First, we exposed CCP's human rights

abuses to multiple players—government, business, universities, pension funds, stock exchanges, financial institutions, the press, and civil society. We urged these institutions to act on their moral and fiduciary duty to disclose and divest from Chinese companies enabling human rights atrocities.

Nury Turkel, the Commissioner on Religious Freedom who was born in a China re-education camp for Uyghurs, took notice.

“Keith Krach was the first government official to openly label the CCP’s atrocities against the Uyghurs as genocide,” he said in a public statement.

“In addition to issuing the first business advisory, he compared the genocide in Xinjiang to the Holocaust, and called for divestment from Chinese companies complicit in human rights abuses. His letters to American CEOs, civil society leaders and university governing boards has spawned a divestment movement on college campuses.”

ARCHITECTING THE \$280B BIPARTISAN CHIPS ACT -

The power of unity through non-partisanship. In my second month on the job, I was summoned to a closed-door Senate Intelligence Committee meeting about China’s technological threat. The senators were demanding a plan for accelerating the development of critical technologies.

To their astonishment, following the meeting, we unveiled the Global Economic Security Strategy draft, which included the design of a tech research funding bill.

Soon after, we presented the outline of a bill to boost investment in high-tech research crucial for national security to Senators Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Todd Young (R-IN). The plan aimed to turn \$150 billion in government R&D funding into a \$500 billion investment, with matching contributions from the private sector and allied countries. A few months later, the two Senators, along with Reps. Ro Khanna (D-CA) and Mike Gallagher (R-WI.), introduced the Endless Frontiers Act, which substantially increased investments in AI, semiconductors, quantum computing, advanced communications, biotechnology, and clean energy.

To address the lack of manufacturing

plans in the U.S., particularly in the critical industry of semiconductors, we focused on onshoring TSMC to encourage other chip companies and suppliers to rebuild the U.S. chip ecosystem. Since the TSMC announcement, there has been over \$350 billion worth of semiconductor investment and jobs committed in the U.S. We also used TSMC’s investment as the crucial catalyst to design a bipartisan bill, then called CHIPS for America, with Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and Mark Warner (D-VA.). American semiconductor manufacturing is already coming back.

The world sorely needs a new generation of bold, trustworthy, transformational leaders.

The Endless Frontiers Act and the Chips for America Act eventually got combined into the monumental bipartisan \$280 billion CHIPS and Science Bill. After our term in office was over, we continued to work with the Senate, the House, and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimundo to pass the bill. I was invited to the White House on August 9, 2022, when President Biden signed the bill into law.

I was proud that the EE Times, the Bible for electric engineers, labeled me as the architect of the CHIPS and Science Act. But, without the team’s bipartisan efforts initiating and designing the first two packages, the \$280 billion bill would have never happened.

ULTIMATE SCORECARD - The final validation of our efforts came just one minute after my term ended. That’s when Xi Jinping imposed lifelong

sanctions on my family and me. The sanctions were a testament to our mission’s success. I view it as a badge of honor.

A year later, the Trust Doctrine received global recognition. To my amazement, I was nominated for the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize for “the creation and application of the Trust Doctrine to counter technological authoritarianism, bolster global economic security, uphold Taiwan’s democracy, and safeguard human rights.”

I am immensely proud of my team at the State Department. We created a transformational, trust-based diplomacy that integrates technology expertise and Silicon Valley strategies into foreign policy. Crucially, our non-partisan approach ensured policy continuity across administrations, a consistency that is vital to our allies. Nothing strikes fear into the heart of authoritarian regimes more than a truly United States and a solid democratic alliance.

Continuing our mission, we established the nonpartisan Krach Institute for Tech Diplomacy at Purdue, now a leading global authority for advancing freedom through trusted technology. The institute has launched expansive initiatives to bridge the digital divide in low-income nations and develop training programs for global diplomats. We have also been entrusted with leading the Global Tech Security Commission, with a mandate to forge a bipartisan tech-security playbook .

ALF MISSION - ALF is a call to action for the dreamers and doers of our time. The world sorely needs a new generation of bold, trustworthy, transformational leaders. The pace of change is accelerating, and global challenges are more complex than ever before. The call is out for leaders who can unify, motivate, and inspire.

As this climber looks back from the plain at this beloved mountain we call ALF, where I learned that a truly meaningful career is about giving back, I understand that T2 really is a magic formula for making a difference in this world. So, what does Transformation to the power of Trust equal? It equals all things are possible, or Infinity to the power of Infinity—is the biggest number in the universe. ■



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