



SPARK

How to Lead Yourself and Others to Greater Success

By Angie Morgan, Courtney Lynch and Sean Lynch

The **SPARK** Experience: A leadership book study

Six Leaders + Six Weeks = Better Leaders, Better World

GROUP LEADER KIT

The concept of leadership is not a difficult one to understand. It's simply about taking care of others and treating them fairly, communicating in a way that lets others know what they must do to be successful, and passing along praise for a job well done. It's that straightforward, but it's by no means intuitive. It must be learned and practiced. **SPARK** will help you do just that.

— FREDERICK W. SMITH, CHAIRMAN AND CEO, FEDEX —

The **SPARK** Experience: A leadership book study

Six Leaders + Six Weeks = Better Leaders, Better World

GROUP LEADER KIT

Congratulations! You've taken the first step to an exciting, valuable leadership development experience. By choosing to lead a **SPARK** book study, you'll be learning leadership best practices and supporting others in their development. You'll also help ignite personal and organizational growth through idea exchange, best practice sharing and application of lessons learned.

This kit contains everything you need to get your **SPARK** Experience up and running.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The **SPARK** Experience is a six-week book study on the leadership book, *SPARK: How to Lead Yourself and Others to Greater Success*. You'll choose five additional people (colleagues, team members, friends) to commit about an hour a week to the program for a total of six weeks. Your group can meet in person, or you can choose to meet virtually using a conference line for your discussions.

The **SPARK** Experience also includes a final challenge. At the end of your book club's journey, your team members will each make a commitment to pay the leadership learning forward by inspiring a new group of six to engage in, and benefit from, The **SPARK** Experience.

SIX STEPS FOR SUCCESS

- 1 Identify five other individuals you'd like to invite to join you on The **SPARK** Experience.

You can choose to invite people you know, or if you are seeking to expand your personal network, consider inviting people you don't know to participate. One way to do this is to ask your colleagues and friends to refer you to others who would enjoy the program. Or, you can approach co-workers you find interesting (this is a great opportunity to create a multi-generational learning group) and ask them to join. (A sample email invitation for your book club follows this section.) Keep in mind, leaders exist at all levels of an organization, you don't have to be a manager to be a leader. The **SPARK** Experience is designed for all professionals regardless of their title, rank or positional authority.

- 2 Outline the logistics for your group.

In our busy lives, a little structure goes a long way towards a quality experience. Decide when your **SPARK** Experience will start and end. Some groups meet at different times each week, others have a standing time.
- 3 Make sure all group members have a copy of **SPARK**.

SPARK is available for sale at all major retailers.
- 4 Communicate regularly with your group.

We've prepared a Weekly Email and Agenda for each of your meetings. Group members should complete their reading assignment before the weekly meeting. Each week's reading will take approximately 30 minutes.
- 5 Be respectful of your group's time.

Start and end all meetings on time. We recommend weekly meetings last 30 minutes, and are organized and focused. The **SPARK** Experience Weekly Agendas assist with keeping your group sessions relevant and on point.
- 6 At the conclusion of your **SPARK** Experience, CELEBRATE!

Also, provide your materials and any best practices for running the group to your group members after your final meeting. Group members may download their own **SPARK** Experience kits at www.sparkslead.us. Serve as a resource as your group members accept the leadership challenge of starting their own **SPARK** Experience with additional leaders.

Sample Email Invitation

*Inviting others to join your **SPARK** Experience is easy. You need to decide if you'd like to have your club members be people you know or people you'll enjoy getting to know. Here's a simple email you can cut, paste, and personalize to your prospective members.*

Hi _____.

I'd like to invite you to join a unique, short-term book club focused on personal and professional leadership development. The program is called The **SPARK** Experience. I will be leading a group of six who will be reading the best-selling leadership book *SPARK: How to Lead Yourself and Others to Greater Success*.

The entire experience is designed to fit your busy schedule. Your commitment to our group will require about an hour a week. That time will be split between reading and our group discussion of the book. If you'd like more information on the book, visit www.sparkslead.us.

I'd be honored to have you join in on this valuable experience. Thank you for letting me know if you are interested in participating.

Setting Up the First Meeting/Call

See below for sample text that will assist you in welcoming your group members.

Subject: Welcome to The **SPARK** Experience

Hello all,

I'm excited to be leading our group study of **SPARK**. Thank you for taking time to participate in what I know will be a great development experience for us all.

We need to set the time for our first meeting. *[Suggest three times that work well for you and ask them to pick the best option for their schedule.]*

We'll be meeting at *[insert location here]*.

[OR] All of our meetings will be via conference call. Here are the conference line details:

[Insert conference line info here.]

If possible, we'll meet at the same time each week. If needed, we can adjust the time each week so all can make the call. We can discuss during our first meeting.

Lastly, can you please reply to this email with a short bio that will serve as your introduction to the group? Feel free to include where you work, what you do and a little bit of background on your interests.

Looking forward to the learning ahead,

Once a time has been set for the first meeting, send an invite out to your participants. Include the first reading assignment: the Foreword, Introduction and Chapter 1. You can also include the six week reading assignment overview found on the last page of this guide.

Week One Email

Here's sample text for your Week One reminder and overview email. Ideally you'll send this out 3-4 days ahead of the first meeting time.

Subject: Week One — The **SPARK** Experience

Hi all,

I'm looking forward to our first meeting this week. As a reminder, our meeting will take place at *[insert time, date and location]*.

Attached are brief bios from each of our group members.

Thank you for honoring your commitment to participate in our group. Please complete your first reading assignment before the call. That assignment is to start the book and read through page 32 including the Foreword, Introduction and Chapter 1.

From the reading you'll:

- Learn why FedEx CEO Fred Smith believes that organizational excellence happens one leader at a time
- Understand what a Spark is
- Discover why leader development is critical
- Confront the myths of leadership

Week One Meeting Agenda

Open the meeting by asking everyone to introduce themselves and provide one insight from the first reading assignment that they found interesting or helpful and why they found that point significant.

Then, guide your group in a discussion of some of the following suggested questions or brainstorm your own line of questioning.

* FOREWORD

- * Fred Smith is an accomplished entrepreneur who leads one of the 100 largest companies in the world. Were you surprised to learn that he credits much of his success to his Marine Corps service? Share your thoughts.
- * The authors define what a “Spark” is in their introduction. How do you define a Spark? Is it important/relevant for you to be a Spark — why?

* INTRODUCTION

- * Are you a Spark? Do you want to become a Spark? Why is it important to recognize that you, or others you know, are Sparks?
- * Sean talks about how his path to learning how to lead began with important yet difficult choices. He writes that as a young person after changing his major from engineering to philosophy and making a commitment to join the Air Force, he got, “zero affirmation from my environment that my decisions were good ones, but they felt right to me. For the first time in my life, I was pursuing goals that were aligned with my passions.” Have you ever had a moment where few people affirmed your choices, yet you knew they were steps you had to take?
- * Do you believe leadership is as easy as a choice? Can you recall a time in your life when you had to choose to lead?
- * **SPARK’s** authors define a leader as someone who influences outcomes and inspires others. They acknowledge that most people think of leadership as a title, not as a set of behaviors. They believe that you can be a manager without being a leader, and that the reverse is also true. You can be a leader without being a manager. What times in your career or life have you had to lead without authority?

* CHAPTER 1

* The authors point out three “leadership myths:”

- Leaders are born.
- Leaders trust their instincts.
- A title makes you a leader.

Have you ever believed any of these myths? How have your perspectives on leadership changed after reading this chapter?

* Courtney writes that during her Marine Corps training she came face to face with her limitations and had to, “struggle with my ego, which was real, powerful and dangerous and would often prevent me from practicing the self-confrontation necessary to overcome my weaknesses.” Can you recall a time in your life when you were confronted with a weakness that you had to overcome? What was the situation and what did you learn?

* Angie’s self-confrontation led her to challenge a long-held belief she had about herself (i.e. that she was bad at math). After she confronted it, she was able to discover that this belief wasn’t true. Did this make you think about narratives you have about your own life and whether or not they are true? Please share.

As you wrap up your week one meeting, agree on next week's meeting time.



SPARK ACTION

Encourage your group to download chapter 1 materials at www.sparkslead.us. They’ll find exercises about building relationships, self-awareness, and facilitating a leadership discussion among colleagues.

Week Two Email

Here's sample text for your Week Two reminder and overview email. Ideally you'll send this out 3-4 days ahead of the meeting time.

Subject: Week Two — The **SPARK** Experience

Hi all,

I really enjoyed last week's meeting and I am looking forward to continuing our discussions of **SPARK**.

This week we'll connect at *[insert time, date and location]*.

The reading assignment to be completed before the call is: Chapters 2 and 3 (pages 33-76).

These chapters focus on:

- Gaining awareness of your current values (I encourage you to complete the values exercise discussed at the end of Chapter 2 (see pages 53-54))
- Recognizing that before you lead others you have to be able to lead yourself
- What it takes to build the credibility necessary to have influence on others
- Why feedback is an essential component of successful teams

I look forward to speaking soon,

Week Two Meeting Agenda

Growth as a leader requires small behavior changes maintained consistently over time. Begin this second meeting with everyone providing a quick update of any lessons learned so far and how they have begun implementing something they have learned. Then direct a guided discussion on some of the suggested queries below or by utilizing your own questions.

* CHAPTER 2

- * Trust, values and character can seem like touchy-feely topics for professionals. Why do you believe they are important to leader development?
- * How can you tell if someone is trustworthy? What behaviors do they demonstrate that make them trustworthy?
- * Angie explains that much of her early leadership training as a Marine was designed to test if she could uphold the Marine Corps' values of honor, courage and commitment when she was tired and stressed. What do you do (or should you do) to uphold your values when you're maxed out?
- * Did anyone have a chance to complete the Values Exercise at the end of Chapter 2? What did you learn?
- * Sean ultimately had to let go of his career as a fighter pilot to honor his values. He believes the sacrifice was worth it. What have you had to sacrifice to live your values?
- * Why can it be difficult to recognize a disconnect between our actions and values?
- * Share an experience when you made a choice based on what you value and discuss how it turned out for you.



SPARK ACTION

Encourage your group to download chapter 2 materials at www.sparkslead.us. They'll find exercises about identifying important values and developing mentor relationships.

* CHAPTER 3

- * Reflecting on the four keys to credibility highlighted in this chapter (see page 57), which ones do you demonstrate well? Which ones are challenging for you?
- * The “Say-Do Gap” is the space between your words and your actions. It measures your consistency. In what areas of your life is your “Say-Do Gap” narrow? How can you improve?
- * Why is providing feedback to others helpful? What’s a best practice you use when sharing feedback with someone else?
- * Do you receive consistent feedback in your working environment?



SPARK ACTION

Encourage your group to download chapter 3 materials at www.sparkslead.us. They'll find exercises about building credibility, narrowing the say-do gap, and facilitating a discussion about accountability.

Week Three Email

Here's sample text for your Week Three reminder and overview email. Ideally you'll send this out 3-4 days ahead of the meeting time.

Subject: Week Three — The **SPARK** Experience

Hi all,

Thank you for your continued participation in our leadership development journey. I really appreciate everyone's commitment and candor.

This week we'll meet up at *[insert time, date and location]*.

The reading assignment to be completed before the call is: Chapter 4 (pages 77-97).

This chapter focuses on accountability. From the reading you'll:

- Understand how self-evaluation drives excellence
- Explore why accountability is so rare
- Recognize how by owning our mistakes we inspire others and create a culture of candor
- Realize that every path to overcoming challenge starts with accountability

Looking forward to our next discussion,

Week Three Meeting Agenda

The week's material focused on one chapter and one powerful topic: accountability. Begin your meeting by highlighting how accountability is your ability to seek to take responsibility before you begin to place blame. Then, in an open-ended manner, ask your group why accountability is a valuable behavior for leaders.

Here are additional suggested questions for your third meeting. Select the ones you find most interesting for discussion.

* CHAPTER 4

- * The authors state that blaming someone else (for problems) has become a cultural norm. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Share your perspective.
- * Can you recall a time in your life when demonstrating accountability was challenging? What were the circumstances?
- * What are little things you can stop or start doing to develop your ability to demonstrate accountability?
- * Sean shares a story of how he felt after making, and having to disclose, a significant mistake to his team (when he had failed to plug in his g-suit, causing him to lose consciousness when flying). Can you relate to this story? Share an example of a time when admitting your mistake was difficult for you, but valuable for others.
- * A leader's actions under stress are mentioned again in this chapter as Courtney shares, "Stress has a funny way of bringing out unhealthy, unproductive emotions." How does stress impact your personal behavior as a leader? How will you become more accountable to minimizing others' exposure to your stress reactions?
- * At the end of the chapter, the authors share that, "The more consistent your ability to be accountable becomes, the more consistent success becomes for you and the teams you are a part of." Why do you believe there's such a strong connection between accountability and success?
- * We have reached the midpoint of our **SPARK** Experience. How is this book and/or our group having an impact on you?



SPARK ACTION

Encourage your group to download chapter 4 materials at www.sparkslead.us. They'll find exercises to help examine their current challenges and how to talk about accountability with colleagues.

Week Four Email

Here's sample text for your Week Four reminder and overview email. Ideally you'll send this out 3-4 days ahead of the meeting time.

Subject: Week Four — The **SPARK** Experience

Hi all,

I truly appreciate your time and contribution to our book study. I am looking forward to this week's meeting.

We'll meet up at *[insert time, date and location]*.

Our reading assignment for this week is Chapter 5 (pages 98-120). With this reading we'll explore these topics:

- Why intentional action matters
- The importance of imagining a future that is consistent with your values
- Awareness that continuous learning allows you to clarify your path forward
- By understanding we have limits to our capacity, we recognize we have to say “no” to some opportunities in order to say “yes” to others

Week Four Meeting Agenda

None of us can predict the future, yet as leaders it's important that we create a vision for our personal and professional future. Our intentional actions allow us to shape circumstances versus be at the mercy of them.

Here are reflection questions for your review of Chapter 5.

* CHAPTER 5

- * In this chapter of **SPARK**, the authors are encouraging us to envision the difference between where we are today and where we want to be. Angie, Sean and Courtney discuss how they don't support a "quit your job and change your life" mentality. Instead, they suggest deep reflection on how you want to direct your life so you can achieve a better future. Then, you can make the small choices necessary to get you closer to living the life you want to lead.
- * What are simple aspects of your life that you'd like to change?
- * What are the commitments you recognize you need to make in order to move in this positive direction?
- * If you think about your professional self five years from now, what's one thing you want to be true? How will you go about making that happen?
- * Was there a story or example in this chapter that you could relate to?
- * Why can it be difficult to imagine or re-imagine our future?
- * The authors talk about how humans are not machines and that we have maximum capacities. Do you find it challenging to say "no"? What are your best practices for saying "no"?



SPARK ACTION

Encourage your group to download chapter 5 materials at www.sparkslead.us. They'll find exercises for developing their vision, recognizing burnout, and creating a plan for intentional action during the next 100 days.

Week Five Email

Here's sample text for your Week Five reminder and overview email. Ideally you'll send this out 3-4 days ahead of the meeting time.

Subject: Week Five — The **SPARK** Experience

Hi all,

We have two great chapters to discuss during our next meeting. Please read Chapters 6 & 7 (pages 121-172) prior to our next conversation.

We'll meet at *[insert time, date and location]*.

Chapters 6 & 7 explore the concepts of service-based leadership and confidence. From the reading you'll:

- Learn how by understanding and meeting the needs of others you'll build the trust needed to lead
- Realize that service to others can happen in the simplest ways
- Become aware of how insecurity can often accompany success
- Recognize that confidence comes from within as well as the steps to build it

Looking forward to the meeting,

Week Five Meeting Agenda

It takes confidence and courage to step up and serve others. As you start this meeting, ask your group to share some of the simple service-based leadership actions they take on behalf of others each day. As your group members discuss best practices, you might consider keeping a list to share at the end of the meeting. These outward focused actions are examples of how you can make leadership a daily habit.

Here is a selection of discussion questions for Chapters 6 & 7.

* CHAPTER 6

- * What did you know about service-based leadership prior to reading this chapter? Is this a practice that you've heard promoted before?
- * Our instincts for self-preservation and self-focus can be pretty strong. Overriding these instincts and instead working to understand and meet the needs of others can be challenging. Why do you believe it's challenging for you to be a service-based leader at times?
- * Angie shares the story of "Coca-Cola," a tough, demanding — yet compassionate — leader who had no problem holding others accountable to performance standards. How did this story impact you?
- * Courtney shares that the presence of service-based leadership can be palpable. Have you ever worked for a manager who was also a service-based leader? How was that experience valuable for you?
- * Angie, Courtney and Sean challenge us to create our own leadership laboratory and focus on serving others for at least ten minutes a day. What would you do and what type of impact do you think it'll have?
- * One particular challenge of being a service-based leader is follow through. We can have great intentions to take action on behalf of others, but then neglect to do so. Why does this happen, and how can we prevent it?



SPARK ACTION

Encourage your group to download chapter 6 materials at www.sparkslead.us. They'll find exercises about team culture and building a service habit.

* CHAPTER 7

- * The authors state, “Your confidence level will determine the level of results you experience.” Share an experience you had where either your confidence or lack thereof impacted the result.
- * On page 148 of the chapter, four strategies for developing strong confidence are shared. Which one represents a strength for you? Which one is more challenging for you to demonstrate?
- * The phrase “fake it till you make it” is a popular one Sean talks about in regards to confidence. He shares that, “Pretending to be someone you’re not isn’t going to help you be the person you need to be when the pressure is on.” Do you think it’s easy to spot someone who lacks sincere confidence? Share your thoughts.
- * Complete this sentence: If I had greater confidence, I would.... .
- * What will you commit to doing in order to build a more consistent level of confidence?



SPARK ACTION

Encourage your group to download chapter 7 materials at www.sparkslead.us. They'll find exercises on confidence moments and positive appraisals.

Week Six Email

Here's sample text for your Week Six reminder and overview email. Ideally you'll send this out 3-4 days ahead of the meeting time.

Subject: Week Six — The **SPARK** Experience

Hi all,

We did it! We met the challenge of completing the **SPARK** Experience as a team... congratulations! Our final meeting will take place at *[insert time, date and location]*.

Please finish **SPARK** prior to our meeting. You'll be reading Chapter 8 and the Conclusion (pages 173–201). This final material covers these topics:

- How consistency is necessary to achieve results
- Why dependability matters even more in today's fast-paced world
- How pushing through discomfort with grit and perseverance leads to success
- The importance of readiness

See you at our final meeting,

Week Six Meeting Agenda

*Congratulations! Your group has completed The **SPARK** Experience. Spend time during this meeting celebrating your accomplishments. As you celebrate the experience you had, encourage the group to consider leading The **SPARK** Experience with five new group members as you all work to pay forward the positive leadership development experience. Share this guide with your group members as you set them up for success with their future groups.*

A starter question for this week can be a brief focus on what each group member enjoyed most about the book club experience.

Here are suggested questions for this meeting; as always, feel free to add your own to the mix.

* CHAPTER 8

- * This chapter introduces the topic of “readiness.” What does “readiness” look like in your world? What does it mean to you?
- * Consistency, reliability and dependability are not flashy topics. Yet, they are essential to being an effective leader. How do you rate yourself on your consistency, reliability and dependability?
- * What are your success habits? Share the little habits you demonstrate, day in and day out, that you believe contribute to your success.
- * On pages 187-188, the authors share some practical time management tips. Which of these tips will you try?



SPARK ACTION

Encourage your group to download chapter 8 materials at www.sparkslead.us. They'll find exercises about building consistency and improving time management.

* CONCLUSION & WRAP-UP QUESTIONS

- * **SPARK** shares seven actions you can take to build your ability to lead. Review and reflect on the summary of the seven actions found on page 196 and share with the group the one(s) you plan to focus most on developing.
- * What about The **SPARK** Experience was most memorable or valuable for you?
- * Will you start another **SPARK** group? Who will you invite to participate in your next **SPARK** Experience book club?



SPARK ACTION

Encourage your group members to accept the leadership challenge of starting their own **SPARK** Experience with additional leaders. They can download Group Leader Kits at www.sparkslead.us.

Enhancing The **SPARK** Experience

When leading The **SPARK** Experience, you have many opportunities to create a positive experience for your group members. Here are some “extras” you might consider doing to make your book study even more engaging and valuable:

- * Purchase copies of **SPARK** for each of your participants, sharing them with your group ahead of the first meeting.
- * Help your participants plan for and stay on track with their reading by sharing an overview of the six-week reading schedule early on in your process. Here’s a sample plan:

Week	Reading	Pages
1	Foreword, Introduction, Chapter 1	Start through page 32
2	Chapters 2 & 3	Pages 33–76
3	Chapter 4	Pages 77–97
4	Chapter 5	Pages 98–120
5	Chapters 6 & 7	Pages 121–172
6	Chapter 8, Conclusion	Pages 173–201

- * Send a handwritten note to each participant congratulating them on completing the experience and sharing specific feedback about how they contributed to the group. If you work in the same organization, you might also consider sending an email to each of your participants’ managers highlighting their contributions to the group.
- * Host a reunion meeting several months after you complete the experience to see how all are doing.
- * Subscribe to Lead Star’s Leadership Moments at www.leadstar.us for weekly leadership insights and inspiration. Share these insights with your group members.
- * Consider hosting another group for The **SPARK** Experience.

Thank you for your leadership!