



We believe *SPARK* can help you view leadership in a new, exciting light. We're honored to share this excerpt of our book and look forward to supporting you on your leadership development journey.

— *Your friends at Lead Star* —

www.sparklead.us

SPARK: INTRODUCTION — DEFINING A SPARK

A Spark is all about change.

Sparks are people who recognize they don't have to accept what's given to them. They can do things differently to create the change they'd like to see. Their actions can directly shape their future and they can make things better.

A Spark is also a moment when you realize you have the ability to be a part of the solution you seek. You don't have to wait around for someone to create opportunities for you. You can create them yourself.

When Sparks are ignited, they're a catalyst for personal and organizational change. They're the individuals who have the courage to stand up and say, "*We don't have to do things like we've always done them. We can do things better.*" They then cultivate the fortitude and temperament to lead themselves and others towards the results they seek.

Sparks aren't defined by the place they hold on an organizational chart, yet they exist throughout organizations. They're defined by their actions, commitment, and will, not job titles. They're the ones who say, "*I'll lead this.*" "*I'll take responsibility,*" or "*This is tough, but we'll get it done.*" And then they follow through.

Sparks are hard to pinpoint during job interviews; their resumes might not convey their ingenuity and perseverance. They also don't always stand out in organizations. They may not fit into the right mold or have the right pedigree to be identified as "talent," yet their efforts are the reason great ideas get implemented, organizational change efforts take hold, and employee retention is strong.

Our world needs Sparks now more than ever.

The workplace reality is the rate of change, the emergence of technology, the shifting workforce demographics and the industry disruptions have created a VUCA landscape: *A Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous* environment. We — the authors — all heard this acronym referenced when we served in the military and are now fascinated by how often business professionals use the same term to describe their working experience.

To help us confront VUCA, the military had invested thousands of hours into our leadership skills development, which transformed us into Sparks and helped us develop the inner confidence, commitment and drive to see results through at all costs. Most professionals don't get access to this type of development, which leaves them at a disadvantage when faced with challenge and change.

When many businesses seek to develop their teams, they start with hard skills and competencies, reserving leadership skills for the management ranks. Then, when leadership development happens, the curriculum typically consists of coaching, communication, and project management skills in one or two-day courses. These topics are important, but they are events — *not processes* — and they fail to help individuals build the capacity to develop and apply the behaviors that grant influence, inspire others, and drive results.

Furthermore, what gets lost in this approach is the opportunity to create organizational agility. Long gone are the days when one leader — *or a select few leaders* — call all the shots. As businesses become more global, and matrices change reporting relationships, organizations need to decentralize decision-making and depend upon individual contributors to get the job done. Without the proper development, these individuals can be stymied and initiatives can get stalled.

Organizations need leaders represented at all levels to ensure Sparks — and those with Spark potential — have the ability to create impact.

Our society values leadership. *Craves it, for that matter*. Yet, we don't teach it in formal education. Some of the most prestigious colleges and universities guarantee their programs will make you a leader; the reality is they don't offer leadership courses or even the experiences to make leadership development possible. A certificate or degree doesn't make you a leader. You make you a leader. And when you demonstrate leadership behaviors, you become a Spark.

This book is for you: The individual who is determined to take charge of their careers and lead themselves and others to a better place. This book is also for business managers who want to drive performance in their organization by rethinking their approach to talent. Rather than identifying select individuals for development, they want to see every individual working to their fullest ability.

Spark details behavioral-based leadership practices that allow any professional, at any level, the opportunity to flourish. In *Spark*, you'll learn about key leadership behaviors — *Character, Credibility, Accountability, Vision, Service and Confidence* — and how to express them consistently.

Sparks are essential for the growth of any organization; once identified, they can be encouraged and positioned for success. If given the right setting and opportunities, Sparks can truly make all the difference in your organization. And if you're a Spark and have the courage to forge ahead, then you will find yourself on a very fast track.

Becoming a Spark begins with a choice. It requires you to rethink how you respond to the most pressing challenges you're facing. Do you submit to them, assuming you can't possibly do anything about them? Do you approach them the same way as you always have, expecting you'll get a different result? Or do you take a stance and lead? Think carefully before you respond, because your response can change everything, for you, the people who depend upon you, and your organization. ✨



SEVEN BEHAVIORS OF A SPARK

- * Character
- * Credibility
- * Accountability
- * Act with Intent
- * Be of Service
- * Consistency
- * Confidence

Read more at
www.sparkslead.us