SPARK: How to Lead Yourself and Others to Greater Success
by Angie Morgan, Courtney Lynch and Sean Lynch
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, January 2017
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SPARK: How to Lead Yourself and Others to Greater Success

OVERVIEW

**SPARK** details “the behaviors that any professional, at any level, in any organization, can adopt to be a stronger leader.”
— Frederick W. Smith, Chairman and CEO, FedEx Corporation

**LEADERSHIP IS NOT ABOUT JOB TITLES — IT’S ABOUT ACTION AND BEHAVIOR**

In **SPARK**, Business Experts Angie Morgan, Courtney Lynch, and Sean Lynch Show How Anyone Can Become An Extraordinary Leader By Embracing Seven Key Behaviors

Many people believe that leaders are the rare few at the upper echelons of a business or other enterprise. But the truth is that leaders can be found at any level of an organization. They are the Sparks – the doers, thinkers, innovators, and key influencers who are catalysts for personal and organizational change. “Sparks are not defined by the place they hold on an organizational chart. They are defined by their actions, commitment, and will,” explain Angie Morgan, Courtney Lynch, and Sean Lynch, authors of the new book, **SPARK: How to Lead Yourself and Others to Greater Success** (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; January 2017).

When Sparks are ignited, their actions can directly shape the future. They make things better. 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.”

In their book, the authors show how anyone can become a Spark. Drawing on their backgrounds as military officers and their experiences as principals of Lead Star, a leadership consulting firm where they have advised organizations such as Facebook, Accenture, Marathon Oil, and the United Way, the authors present a roadmap for leadership development that can help anyone succeed. The key, they assert, is a willingness to commit to becoming a leader, a true Spark.

The SPARK blueprint encompasses seven essential behaviors that are illustrated throughout the book with extensive examples and anecdotes. Each section also includes actions that readers can take to enhance these qualities within themselves. The seven behaviors are:
Character: You cannot lead others unless you are able to lead yourself first. This means having a solid understanding of your values, and how these manifest into your character.

Credibility: Credibility forms the basis of trust. If people can’t trust you, you can’t lead them.

Accountability: Sparks resist the powerful, human instinct to place blame. They seek to identify how their own actions, or inactions, contributed to the situations they find themselves in.

Act with Intent: Sparks are the people who envision what a better future looks like, and take actions that lead themselves — and others — towards it.

Be of Service: When people feel cared for because you’re serving them, they begin to feel a sense of loyalty, commitment, and camaraderie. They become transformed from a group of individuals into a team.

Confidence: Sparks consciously manage their internal thought process to always see themselves as strong and capable.

Consistency: Consistency is your ability to adhere to your values and intentions regardless of your circumstances. Being someone people can always count on opens doors to opportunities.

“Leadership isn’t a set of abstract concepts reserved only for those who are anointed ‘management material,’” write Morgan, Lynch and Lynch. Moreover, “leadership at all levels” isn’t just an effective cultural strategy that organizations can adopt — it has become a strategic imperative in today’s fast-paced, ever-changing business world.

With SPARK as a blueprint, anyone can become a catalyst for change, and any organization can identify and develop Sparks throughout their ranks.

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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 standout 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
Angie Morgan
Founder, Lead Star
Co-author of SPARK

Shortly after launching her professional career, Angie saw a need in the workplace: professionals consistently showed the capacity to be leaders, but no one was actively helping them get there.

Angie founded Lead Star to help professionals understand how they can achieve greater success by implementing leadership practices into their work routines. Her remedy: designing leadership programs that are culturally relevant for her clients and focused on results. As a keynote speaker and workshop facilitator, Angie inspires individuals to take action to ensure their performance is high and their goals are achieved.

Angie also serves as the Director of the Center for Creative Leadership’s Partner Network, convening and connecting leading consultancies with the Center’s innovative thought leadership, research and development solutions.

Prior to creating Lead Star, Angie worked for Pfizer and Merck as a sales professional where she had firsthand experience working in business operations. This results-oriented mindset is brought to every project she is engaged in.

Angie’s leadership expertise formed after she graduated from the University of Michigan and served as an officer in the United States Marine Corps. She also holds an MBA from the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. Angie is passionate about taking a heady concept — like leadership — and breaking it down to achievable actions that anyone, at any level of an organization, can demonstrate. She has seen the advantage that businesses can gain when everyone — from the CEO to the frontline employee — is a leader.

Angie is the mother of two young boys and wife of a retired Marine Corps officer. When not at work, you can find her absorbed in a book or trail running near her home in Northern Michigan.

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Courtney Lynch
Founder, Lead Star
Co-author of SPARK

From facilitating executive team sessions, to delivering dynamic keynotes and conducting engaging workshops for Lead Star’s diverse portfolio of clients, it’s no wonder Courtney’s passion for leadership is contagious.

As the founding partner of Lead Star, Courtney works closely with all levels of leaders — from CEOs to frontline team members. She designs and delivers development programs that drive immediate results.

Courtney is also the best-selling author of Leading from the Front and has written numerous articles on behavior-based leadership and organizational excellence. She’s been a dynamic guest on CNBC, FOX News, and CNN. Courtney’s efforts with Lead Star have been noted in publications ranging from Fast Company and Inc. to The New York Times.

In addition to her work with consulting clients, Courtney serves as the Director of the Center for Creative Leadership’s Partner Network, convening and connecting leading consultancies with the Center’s innovative thought leadership, research and development solutions.

Prior to starting Lead Star, Courtney’s professional experiences included service as a Captain in the United States Marine Corps, an attorney at one of the nation’s largest law firms and a sales manager for Rational Software. She holds a law degree from William & Mary, an undergraduate degree from North Carolina State University and completed intensive studies at Cambridge University. Courtney lives with her husband and three children in Glen Allen, Virginia.

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Sean Lynch
Senior Consultant, Lead Star
Co-author of SPARK

Lux et veritas — light and truth.

More than the motto of Sean’s alma mater, Yale University, these words also represent Sean’s ability to understand the cultural nuances of client organizations and creatively design impactful and engaging leadership development solutions.

Sean’s early leadership accomplishments occurred post-Yale, as a United States Air Force F-16 fighter pilot. After completing military service, Sean applied his leadership experience to the airline industry as a commercial pilot. Ultimately, his passion for leadership development inspired him to join Lead Star.

Whether facilitating a team session, giving a keynote address, or conducting a workshop, Sean delivers actionable, practical, and engaging content. Sean works with CEOs, executive teams, and frontline managers to help clients achieve exceptional results and lasting change.

Sean’s clients span a broad range of industries including oilfield services, power generation, transportation, and medicine. He lives with his family in lovely Bradenton, Florida.
“SPARK is a myth-destroying book that will make you rethink both the theory and practice of leadership. In a straightforward, direct way, the authors show that leading is a choice, that values and actions must be in synch, and that being of service is the ultimate touchstone of genuine leadership. Whatever your job title or circle of influence, this book can help you light your own spark.”

Daniel H. Pink
Bestselling author of Drive and To Sell is Human

“If you truly want to become a Spark in your organization and in your life, I urge you to read this book now.”

Mike Krzyzewski
Head Coach, Duke University Men’s Basketball

“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

“This powerful book highlights a critical and frequently overlooked truth: Everyone has the potential to be a leader, and organizations reach their full potential only when they develop all of their women and men with that goal in mind. The authors offer plentiful, practical advice, and leaders at every level will learn from their wisdom.”

Vice Admiral John R. Ryan, USN (Ret.)
President and CEO, Center for Creative Leadership
In SPARK, Angie Morgan, Courtney Lynch, and Sean Lynch hit all the right notes at exactly the right time. Their central themes of character, credibility, accountability, intent, service, confidence and consistency are exactly what every leader needs to be reading and practicing now. The truth is that credibility is the foundation of leadership, and without it people just won’t willingly follow someone who aspires to lead. SPARK guides you through the essential steps that will enable you to earn and sustain that credibility. The authors’ extensive leadership experiences under very challenging conditions infuse SPARK with a strong sense of reality. This is a very honest and candid book — one you can believe in, because when you apply the lessons in it, you know that it can be done with authenticity and a sense of service to others. All leaders will benefit from reading and applying SPARK. I highly recommend it.

Jim Kouzes
Coauthor of the bestselling The Leadership Challenge
Dean's Executive Fellow of Leadership, Leavey School of Business, Santa Clara University

“Authors Morgan, Lynch and Lynch offer a compelling step-by-step analysis of the fundamental skills that are needed to become a Spark. The authors’ recommendations for behavioral change, drawn from their early years in the military and then a decade training corporate America, are well researched and documented, and also just have a common sense appeal — comfort with discomfort, for example. Bottom line? We are better employees, better leaders, and more satisfied human beings when we truly understand how to spark others—and ourselves.”

Claire Shipman
Bestselling author of The Confidence Code and Womenomics

“The skills I learned as a Marine 50 years ago have been the foundation of my leadership approach throughout my career. SPARK has captured those critical concepts, and presents them in an organized, effective way that makes it easy to bring them to life in today’s challenging business environment. Having worked first hand with Angie, Courtney and Sean in the past, it is no surprise that they have captured the essence of effective leadership in SPARK.”

Dave Gagnon
CEO, Cafe Rio Mexican Grill
“It’s remarkable how these three ‘can-do’ individuals have pooled their hard-earned management insights into a winning book that can quickly elevate anyone in business to greater heights.”
Alison Levine
International leadership expert and author of the New York Times bestseller On the Edge

“It doesn’t take a job title to learn how to lead. It takes will and commitment. In SPARK, the authors give a clear roadmap for how anyone, at any organizational level, can develop their leadership skills. SPARK is a brilliant foray into intentional leader development — definitely worth the read. The aptly titled SPARK will help any reader build and execute an effective development plan. SPARK creates the power of ownership in development; rather than solving the readers’ challenges, SPARK shapes the reader to pilot their own developmental ship. The authors of SPARK are not only great leadership thinkers, but they have all led people in challenging circumstances — a huge advantage in guiding the rest of us. Trust them to take you to a new level.”
Thomas A. Kolditz
Director, Ann and John Doerr Institute for New Leaders, Rice University
Brigadier General, US Army (ret)

“In these times of change, leadership in organizations, large and small, seek direction and insight into how to best embrace organizational transformation and growth. With uncommon clarity, SPARK lays out a formula for the kind of leadership that can positively transform and empower any organization — founded on ethical values of character and credibility; and by making the point that leadership is not about authority or title, but about influencing outcomes and inspiring others.”
Michael Steinberg, MD
Executive Vice President, UCLA Health

“Winning performance is dependent on Sparks, those rare individuals within your organization who get things done and then some. This book will teach you how to become a Spark...and how to lead them too.”
David Burkus
Author of the revolutionary new book, Under New Management and the host of Radio Free Leader podcast