LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Spark: How to Lead Yourself and Others to Greater Success

by Angie Morgan, Courtney Lynch, and Sean Lynch

Leadership is a choice, not a title. Seven trainable behaviors turn anyone, at any level, into a Spark - a leader people trust.

BEST POINTS FROM THE BOOK

01 **Leadership is behavior, not a job title.**

A Spark is defined by actions, commitment, and will, not by rank. Sparks - the doers and influencers who make things better - can sit anywhere on the org chart.

02 **Leaders are made, not born - so train like it.**

In the book's words: you are not chosen to be a leader; you choose to lead. The seven Spark behaviors are not inborn talents, they are habits built through deliberate practice.

03 **Do not trust your gut blindly. Slow down your first instinct.**

Instinct pushes you to dodge conflict and react defensively. Sparks use cognitive flexibility and cognitive discipline to pause, see the other perspective, and choose the smarter response.

04 **Character means your actions match your values.**

Know what you truly value and let it steer hard decisions. Leading with your values is the gateway to leading others, and even small slips read as hypocrisy.

05 **Credibility is the foundation of all trust.**

Be capable, honest, and dependable, and meet both the stated standards and the unspoken expectations. If people cannot trust you, they will not follow you.

06 **Keep your say-do gap tiny.**

The say-do gap is the distance between what you promise and what you deliver - and it is where credibility leaks. Make promises you keep, and follow through every time.

07 **Own your mistakes fast, and skip the blame.**

Blaming is a survival instinct, not a strategy. Sparks ask what their own part was, own it out loud, and move quickly to the solution.

08 **Act with intent: aim at a better future, then move.**

Hold a clear vision and make daily choices that line up with it - with the discipline and fortitude to keep executing even when you are not sure what to do next.

09 **Serve others before they have to ask.**

Watch for what teammates need - basics first - and meet it. People who feel cared for stop guarding themselves and give their energy to the team.

10 **Confidence is something you manage, not something you wait to feel.**

Your confidence level sets your level of results. Keep a record of past wins and draw on it under pressure, and when fear shows up, trace where it came from and answer it with a plan.

11 **Be an always person, not a sometimes person.**

Consistency runs on readiness, perseverance, and owning your time - asking, what is the highest best use of my time right now? People trust a pattern, not a good day.

12 **Ignite Sparks in other people.**

Every Spark behavior can be developed in others, too. Spot the doers around you, name their strength, and coach it - leadership multiplies when you build it in the team.

THE BOOK, IN SHORT

Angie Morgan and Courtney Lynch are former Marine Corps officers who co-founded the leadership consultancy Lead Star; Sean Lynch is a former Air Force fighter pilot. Their claim is simple: a leader is not the person with the biggest title. A leader is a Spark - a doer, thinker, and influencer who creates change in themselves and the people around them, from any seat in the organization.

The book busts two myths. First, leaders are not born, they are made: nobody springs from the womb ready to lead, and you are not chosen to be a leader - you choose to lead. Second, do not trust your gut: instinct often pushes us to avoid conflict or react defensively, so Sparks train cognitive flexibility and cognitive discipline to slow down and respond on purpose. Leadership then becomes a road map of seven behaviors anyone can develop: character, credibility, accountability, acting with intent, being of service, confidence, and consistency.

Character and credibility come first. Character is the match between your values and your actions, and values work like a North Star for hard decisions. Credibility is the foundation of your leadership style: be capable, honest, and dependable, meet both the written standards and the unspoken expectations, and keep your say-do gap - the distance between what you promise and what you deliver - as small as possible. Without trust, nobody follows for long.

The next behaviors turn trust into results. Accountability means resisting the powerful instinct to blame, finding your own part in a problem, and moving fast to the fix - as the Lead Star founders did when a new hire hurt sales and they realized clients wanted them personally. Acting with intent

means envisioning a better future and making choices that line up with it, even when the next step is unclear. Being of service means anticipating what others need - basics first, in the spirit of Maslow - so they can do their best work.

The last behaviors are about steadiness. Confidence is not left to chance: Sparks manage their inner thought process, draw on a record of past accomplishments when pressure rises, and treat fear as a signal to make a plan. Consistency means being an always person rather than a sometimes person, built on readiness, perseverance, and owning your time. And because each chapter closes with ways to grow the behavior in others, the book doubles as a guide for managers who want to find and develop Sparks across a whole organization. Stories run from Marine Corps and Air Force service to companies like Facebook, Google, and Boston Scientific.

DO THIS WEEK

This week, run two Spark drills. First, pick the behavior you are weakest in and practice it daily - if it is accountability, say your own part in any problem out loud before you mention anyone else's, then name the fix. Second, write down three hard things you have already handled well, and read the list the next time your confidence wobbles. That record is the book's fuel for staying steady under pressure.

By Angie Morgan and Courtney Lynch, former Marine Corps officers and co-founders of the leadership consultancy Lead Star, and Sean Lynch, a former Air Force fighter pilot. First published 2017 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; a New York Times bestseller with a foreword by FedEx founder Frederick W. Smith. Read it if you want to lead well from any seat, with or without a title.