

THE EMOTIONALLY CONNECTED LEADER

ACHIEVING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND PEAK PERFORMANCE

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As many leaders know, organizational change can be difficult. It's often been described as trying to do a U-turn with a freight train—it will eventually happen, but not without extreme effort, resistance, challenges, and friction. Challenges and resistance, like most other aspects of business, are based on emotions. That is why emotionally connected leaders have so much more success in achieving the changes the organization desires and needs to thrive. Being emotionally connected is not giving away authority to others but is tapping into a vein of a wealth of resources to enhance the leaders' authority. It is building up while they build you in order to accomplish organizational goals more efficiently and effectively. It's about leading your team and organization in such a way that aligns and ensures everyone's definition of success—customers, team members, peers, and to those we report.

The Connection

My new study that is the focal point of my new book, *In Great Company: How to Spark Peak Performance by Creating an Emotionally Connected Workplace*, has revealed some results that have allowed me to start many conversations with executives. In a global survey of over 150 employees from Fortune 1000 companies, we determined employees who love their workplace are up to four times more likely to perform at a higher level

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than those who do not. The data shows that receiving respect drives an emotionally connected workplace, which translates to performance and more.

We compiled survey data from a range of respondents from North America, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Across every data set, the results were consistent. Employees of an emotionally connected workplace, where employees love their companies, want to perform at a higher level, stay with their company, and promote it to colleagues and peers. Respondents had a full spectrum of emotions relating to their current employers. I was most interested in studying what it takes for employees to be in the 41% where they love their workplace (see Figure 1).

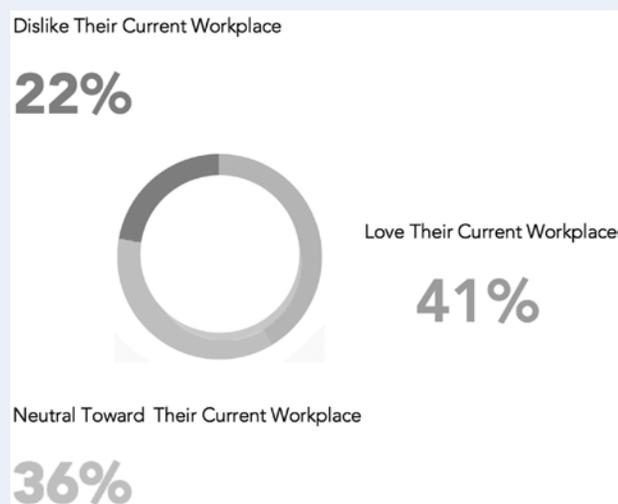


FIGURE 1. RESPONDENTS' FEELINGS TOWARD CURRENT WORKPLACE

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Becoming emotionally connected to team members is no easy task, but can be done by adopting, embracing, and practicing the following five key elements for success that make up the SPARK coaching model for a peak performing culture, as shown in Figure 2.

1. Systemic Collaboration: Insisting on Fairness and Full Participation

It is not a natural process for leaders to automatically implement collaboration procedures, even though the concept of collaboration is highly desired. The first step in the process of systemic collaboration must be taken by the leader of the organization.

Leaders need to not only inspire collaboration but also insist upon it from others. They need to get beyond the rhetoric to make collaboration a priority—and many of the best leaders do.

Leaders can begin with these questions to make collaboration a part of their leadership legacy:

Do I monitor for equal air time in conversations? Empower and even encourage people to speak and express their ideas and concerns without fear of recrimination.

How present am I during conversations? Frequently leaders may ask a question and then interrupt before their colleague is finished responding. Does this sound like you? Regardless of why it happens (time constraints, lack of emotional intelligence), this bad behavior closes off collaboration. If you are authentic in your desire to be a collaborative leader, you need to keep an open mind, actively listen, and exhibit open, impassive body language that signals you are serious about hearing multiple perspectives before making a decision.

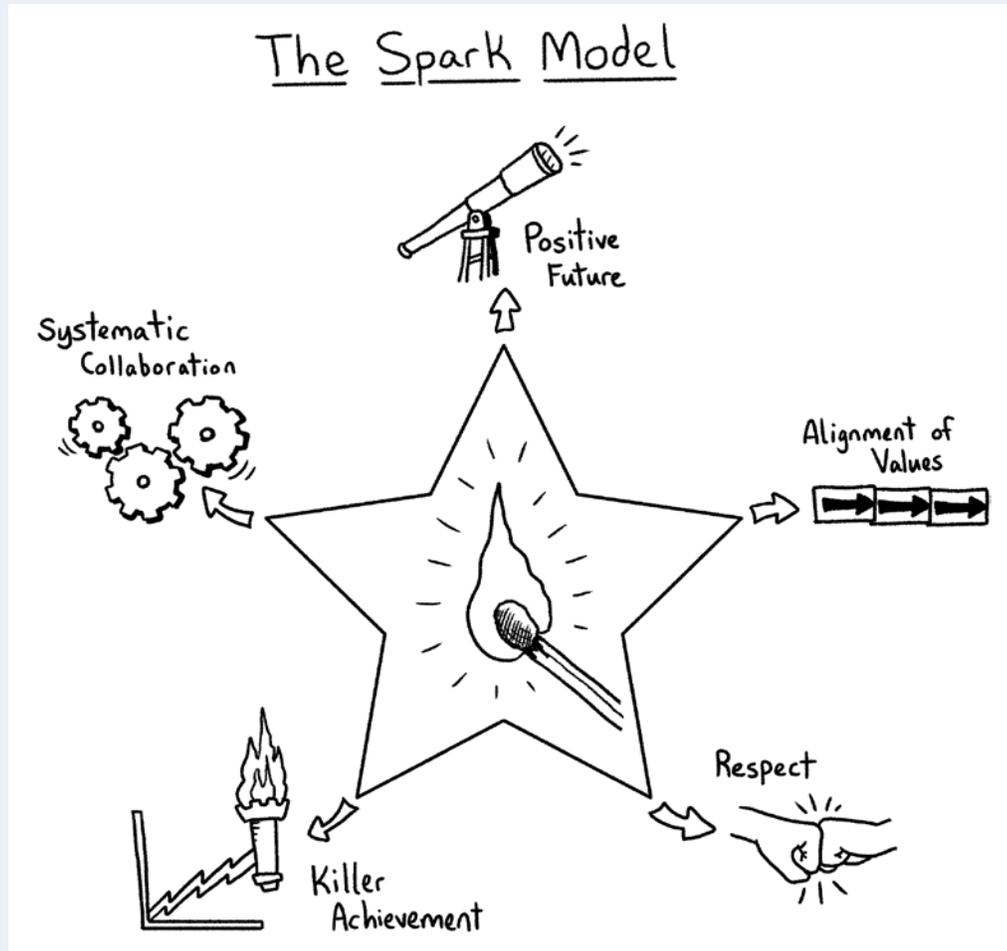


FIGURE 2. THE SPARK MODEL

Do I make functioning teams a priority? Collaborative leaders know that empowered teams can solve problems, generate new ideas, and manage projects efficiently. As a leader, your job is to design the rules so that teams can function collaboratively. For instance: Have you eliminated needless silos? Empowered teams to act within guidelines? Set up an open dialog and systems for sharing information and expertise? Provided the right tools and technology for collaboration? Perhaps most importantly: Have you gotten out of the way to let your teams do their job?

Do I make difficult interactions a positive experience? Collaboration can be challenging, particularly because of the multiple perspectives and differing points of view that often surface emotional reactions and dysfunctional dynamics. Therefore, one of the

most critical competencies leaders can model is the ability to manage difficult conversation without drama. Collaborative leaders resolve conflicts and settle differences in a positive and upbeat way with empathy as opposed to enmity. Leaders need to listen carefully, express their opinion, and then make a call about how to act. After that, everyone supports the decision regardless of what side of the dispute they were on.

2. Positive Future: Being Passionate, Forward Facing, and Eager to Innovate

Emotionally connected leaders have a positive future outlook when they are passionate about their work, innovative, and focused on the future. Being passionate is one of the traits that brought them to a leadership role

and one that will continue to aid in their success. When we think of charismatic leaders in business and society, we often attribute some of their success to passion. Martin Luther King, Jr., was passionate about equality and civil rights. Henry Ford was passionate about advancing automobile manufacturing, and so on. But what about their team members? Are they passionate? Is the leader encouraging a sense of passion in others?

Passion cannot be forced onto others, but it is contagious. Being passionate attracts like-minded passionate employees and can spread to others who long to be passionate about something. Give them that something. Guide them with your passion. Fueled by a passion, you are far more likely to tap into the resilience you need to lead. In addition, if you can engender passion in others, you will surround yourself with the support you need to move toward a positive future.

In addition to being passionate to advocate a positive future, the emotionally connected leader must also have a positive relationship with change. Leaders who have a knack for change are in a better position to make the numerous shifts needed to keep an organization moving in a progressive trajectory. The leader needs to be the one to envision the change, clearly communicate what it looks like, and be the organization's first and best change champion. Only then can the leader expect everyone around them—employees, partners and customers—to take their turn and embrace of transformation.

3. Alignment of Values—Doing What You Say You Will Do

Emotionally connected leaders use values to guide their actions, decisions, and communications and create a “values chain” whereby employees and partners are in sync as they put these values into practice to engage customers. PepsiCo's chief executive officer (CEO) from 2006 to 2018, Indra Nooyi, who was widely credited with transforming the beverage maker, has a leadership model she calls the “5Cs.” They are competency, courage & confidence, communication skills, consistency, and compass. She talked about

this memorable set of leadership promises in board meetings, blogs, keynote speeches, and interviews. She did this to communicate to everyone these important core values, but also so she could put a stake in the ground about her beliefs and hold herself accountable for her actions.

Other examples of alignment of values include David Cote, Chairman and CEO of Honeywell from 2002 to 2017, who refused his annual bonus in 2009 to encourage employees to make sacrifices and embrace austerity in order to avoid layoffs during the Great Recession. And WD-40's CEO Garry Ridge, a passionate believer in creating an enjoyable workplace where people “step into the best versions of themselves,” hosts an annual award ceremony to hand out awards like “The Mother Teresa,” “The Rookie of the Year,” “The Unsung Hero,” and “The Energizer,” to recognize employees for their talents.

Some questions leaders should ask to ensure they are aligning their values correctly:

Do I exemplify our corporate values and set others up to do the same? Communicating core values in writing is a good first step. The next step is demonstrating, through actions, that values are mission critical—a priority for you and employees at every level. In some organizations, the values statement is so concise that leaders can and do recite it frequently. In other cases, leaders mention values explicitly when major decisions are made, making it clear to stakeholders how actions align with the values that define the organization.

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Am I successful in making a business case for the values of the company? Values should guide your decision making. Without a supporting business case, values are easily set aside when a revenue opportunity presents itself—even one that falls outside the scope of the organization’s values. Likewise, a business case for values makes the “what’s in it for us” clear to employees and customers. Southwest Airlines, for example, has a clear and convincing business case for their “employees-first” imperative: “We believe that if we treat our employees right, they will treat our customers right, and in turn that results in increased business and profits that make everyone happy.”

Do I tie values to business strategy? Values alignment should extend beyond corporate culture to business strategy and decision making. This act of alignment is the single most important way you can give employees the tools they need to act in ways that reflect shared values.

4. Respect—Treating Employees Like People

Emotionally connected leaders respect differences, consider opinions, treat people with dignity, and understand that they have lives to lead outside of work. Bob Chapman, CEO of the private holding company Barry-Wehmiller, has a respect-based management philosophy aimed at making people feel valued and cared for. His human-centric take on leading is designed to “add meaning to people’s lives.” And Chapman walks the talk. He offers financial incentives to employees who get health screenings, avoids layoffs, and eliminates things (like time clocks in its factories) that rob people of respect. He avoids demeaning

*Values should guide
your decision making.*

verbiage like “employees” (team members) and head count (heart count). Chapman’s philosophy has clear commonalities with emotional connectedness basing his leadership on empathy and respect. Currently, 79 percent of team members at Barry-Wehmiller say the company truly cares about them.

Two key ingredients for fostering respect are inclusion and trust. Inclusion is at the very center of respect—respecting people’s differences, cultivating their unique strengths, and allowing them to contribute fully and bring their best selves to work. Leaders who practice, cultivate, measure, and incentivize inclusion at all levels are rewarded with a workforce that is diverse, teams that are empowered and creative, and companies that generate greater shareholder value.

The second ingredient, trust, is an essential driver of mutual respect. Yet, like anything else, it can get out of balance. As we have seen, a lack of trust can destroy emotional connectedness. But too much trust? Research shows that an excess of trust, or misplaced trust, can have a negative impact on productivity. Leaders need to be present, offer positive feedback, and add value. The key is to demonstrate trust through appreciation and empowerment, while also giving people the support and guidance they need to be their best. With this, trust is kept in the right measure as a driver of mutual respect. In essence, respect is a reinforcing system—it has an effect. The more you give it, the more you get it, as shown in Figure 3, The Respect Effect.

5. Killer Achievement—Setting People Up to Succeed and Achieve

Killer achievement is leading with an orientation aimed at accomplishing the maximum results using a focused yet flexible approach to execution. It gives employees the support, resources, and motivation they need to achieve. Emotionally connected leaders cultivate killer achievement, not to create a cutthroat or competitive work environment, but to connect people with common goals, set them up to focus on their strengths, and make them more able to master the tasks that matter most. With achievement orientation, when one person succeeds, everyone does. Achievement

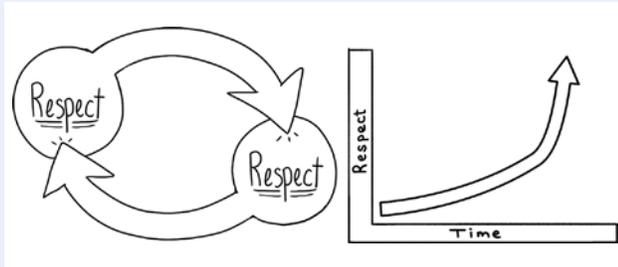


FIGURE 3. THE RESPECT EFFECT

orientation requires a balance between determination and flexibility, because as goals shift, so too must the strategies and training needed to achieve them.

Setting up people to succeed and achieve shows others you have respect for them, care about their well-being and their future, and in your own way ... love them. Being human beings, they naturally will tend to reciprocate, loving their work and their workplace. In the *Emotionally Connected Workplace* study, it was discovered that:

1. People who work in an emotionally connected environment are 94% more likely to perform better and provide results, with 59% saying they are four times more likely.
2. People factors create an emotionally connected workplace. For employees, being a part of a functional community was cited most often in the emotionally connected workplace response. The result: a cohesive team.
3. Costly turnover is reduced. Feelings about the company, including bosses, team members, and peers are significant when employees consider leaving their job.
4. Forty-one percent of employees would recommend their company to a friend or colleague. Top talent is an invaluable resource to find high performing staff. In addition, the team develops a larger sense of community.

Emotionally connected leaders use the following questions to help sharpen their killer achievement instincts:

Do I create and communicate clear, compelling goals? Setting objectives and communicating them crisply is one of the most critical ways leaders can add value. Emotionally connected leaders think about simplicity, meaning, and empowerment—all things that align people around killer achievement. Simplicity, first, is critical because goals need to resonate with people in diverse roles and apply to functions across the organization. They need to be easily understood and widely applicable. Next, you need to communicate the big picture or the “why” that is associated with the goal. After all, this critical context is what tells a story and makes goals more meaningful. Finally, you need to enable people to achieve goals in their own way. In other words, goals are a tool that should be used as much to empower people as manage them.

Do I inspire people to be best in class? People want their work to matter. In fact, research tells us they need a reason for work that adds meaning to their lives. And what better reason is there than the chance to be a part of something great? Emotionally connected leaders set people up to achieve great things by motivating them to be “best in class” at what they do. And there are multiple ways to be the best—being first, improving quality, getting great reviews from customers, being innovative, and so on. People aspire to high achievement. It is the leader’s job to inspire and equip them to be their best and help them celebrate the small wins that mark steady progress along the way.

Do I give people the support they need to achieve? Setting clear goals and motivating people to go for greatness is a solid start. After that, emotionally connected leaders take the next logical step by giving people the support they need to achieve. The first level of support is just-right resources. Allocating funding and assigning people in the right measure is as much an art as it is a science—starving projects sets them up to fail, and overfunding creates pressure and stifles experimentation. Emotionally connected leaders also strive to develop their people. Studies have shown that employees desire training and development options to help them be their best and remain competitive.

Finally, mentoring, coaching, and carefully facilitated meetings are three ways that emotionally connected leaders enable people to come together to support each other and help one another achieve.

Conclusion

The emotionally connected leader needs to be an emotionally intelligent leader, able to manage his or her emotional energy and to focus, renew, and mobilize the collective energy of others. By adopting the five key elements mentioned above, the emotionally connected leader can achieve the desired organizational changes and command peak performance from team members more easily and with less friction and frustration than their more adversarial counterparts. When the emotionally connected leader releases control for trust and skepticism for respect, collaboration becomes easier to obtain and change is embraced rather than feared.



Louis Carter is CEO and founder of Best Practice Institute, social/organizational psychologist, and author of over 11 books on leadership and management including his newest book with McGraw Hill: In Great Company: How to Spark Peak Performance by Creating an Emotionally Connected Workplace.