



WPO SPARK KIT: Your Leadership Story

A curated facilitator kit for WPO Chairs and members

HOW TO USE THIS SPARK KIT

This kit offers you an easy way to facilitate a group discussion about your **members' perception of themselves as leaders**. To get started, we recommend the following steps:

- Review the recommended reading list in the Spark Resource Summary chart below.
- Click through the links to see complete articles and videos in Spark, OR simply read the Executive Summary and Key Points section for quick reference.
- Prepare to facilitate your discussion using the prompting questions & tips suggested on page 3.

TOPIC OUTLINE

Leadership is less about title and more about mindset. Share your leadership story and learn from your peers to deepen self-awareness, connection and trust.

SPARK RESOURCE SUMMARY

The chart below contains a carefully curated selection of Spark content to assist you in leading your discussion. You are encouraged to read the complete articles. However, for your convenience, we've also provided **Executive Summaries and Key Points** on the subsequent pages to simplify your preparation.

SPARK RESOURCE TITLE	TIME COMMITMENT
1. <u>8 Essential Qualities of Successful Leaders</u>	Article - 4 min read
2. <u>The Leap to Leader</u>	Article – 15 min read
3. <u>Leaders, Sharing Your Own Mental Health Story Can Help You Become a Better Ally</u>	Article - 9 min read
4. <u>Entrepreneurship is Management</u> <i>(suggestion: show this at your meeting as foundation for discussion)</i>	Video – 3 min watch
5. <u>Flipping Imposter Syndrome</u>	Video – 3 min read



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PREPARATION FOR SPARK DISCUSSION

WPO Chairs: Share this entire document with your members ahead of your meeting and encourage them to review content. We suggested sharing the 3 min video called 'Entrepreneurship is Management' at your meeting. Your members are likely in Act II of a III Act play called Entrepreneurship. It is a fun analogy to help frame the discussion.

WPO Members: The articles and videos may help you think about your leadership journey and prepare you for the discussion and activity.

SCOPE FOR: Your Leadership Story

Leadership is a broad topic that could go in many directions. To narrow the scope, this Spark kit creates an opportunity for members to share their leadership journey, with an aim to strengthen connections, exchange best practices, and address imposter syndrome challenges.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- Hear how fellow members became leaders.
- Gain insight into how your peers perceive themselves as leaders.
- Identify key characteristics of leaders.
- Find commonalities about leadership strengths and struggles.
- Practice brevity and focus in sharing your story with peers.
- Honor the variety of leaders that make up a WPO Chapter – entrepreneurs, practitioners, professionals, founders etc.. Each has its own set of challenges and rewards.
- Do this [Optional Assessment](#) on leadership style to learn more about yourself.

SPARK DISCUSSION: 30 – 90 MINUTES

Feel free to use the suggested activity, or simply host a discussion with your members about how they have evolved as leaders. Depending on how many are at the meeting, and how long you allocate per person, you should be able to complete the activity in about 60 - 90 minutes.

You can also kick-off the discussion simply by asking for any key learnings from the Spark materials. Always encourage participants to share specific examples vs theoretical responses. We tend to learn best from our peers when we hear stories of real-life experiences.



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SUGGESTED ACTIVITY:

1. **Set-up:** Ask members to work individually for 5-7 minutes to write responses for one or more of the following questions. Ask them to select only **ONE** to share with the group...unless you are dedicating many hours to this activity. 😊
 - a. **IF** the video [Entrepreneurship is Management](#) was viewed by the group: Explore which Act you are in, and what does that mean to your leadership role?
 - b. Origins of you as a leader: what significant person or event set you on a path of leadership or entrepreneurship, and how has that shaped you?
 - c. As a leader, have you ever suffered from 'Imposter Syndrome', and how did you deal with it?
 - d. What animal most exemplifies your leadership style and why?

2. **Discussion and Debrief:** Allowing 3-5 min per person, encourage members to share their responses to **ONE** of the questions above. After each share allow a few minutes to reflect as a group. Ask members who can relate? Or, seek a few positive observations about what has been shared.

DISCUSSION WRAP-UP:

Be sure to wrap-up by sharing key insights and commitments from each participant regarding their plans for implementation. Ideally follow-up at the next meeting to check in on progress.

See the note taking table on the final page if you want to capture action items within this document.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & KEY POINTS FOR SPARK RESOURCES

(NOTED IN CHART ON PAGE 1)

8 Essential Qualities of Successful Leaders

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The article by Rebecca Knight, featuring insights from Harvard Business School professor Linda Hill, outlines the key qualities essential for successful leadership. Professor Hill emphasizes that great leaders are not born with extraordinary abilities but intentionally put themselves in challenging situations to learn, adapt, and grow. The top eight qualities for successful leadership, along with strategies to cultivate them, are as follows:

KEY POINTS:

1. **Authenticity:** Leaders must be genuine and true to themselves to gain trust and inspire others. Seeking feedback and focusing on the positive aspects help in self-awareness and growth.
2. **Curiosity:** A mindset of exploring uncharted territories and understanding possibilities outside internal dynamics. Being open to new experiences, asking basic questions, and reflecting on personal passions will nurture curiosity.
3. **Analytical Prowess:** Leaders need to break down complex problems, identify root causes, and make informed decisions by blending analytics, expertise, and ethical judgment. Dive into data complexity, understand implications, and collaborate with digital natives.
4. **Adaptability:** The rapidly changing world requires leaders to adjust to evolving stakeholder expectations. Seeking experiences that demand flexibility, venturing beyond the comfort zone, and working in diverse environments strengthen adaptability.
5. **Creativity:** Encouraging an environment that nurtures creativity in others is crucial. Recognizing the interconnectedness of diverse perspectives and learning from failure fosters innovation.
6. **Comfort with Ambiguity:** Leaders should develop a systems mindset to understand connections and grapple with opposing ideas in uncertain situations. Embracing complexity, asking "what ifs," and establishing reflective practices enhance comfort with ambiguity.



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7. **Resilience:** Successful leaders recalibrate when veering off course and exhibit resilience in dynamic business environments. Cultivating resilience involves taking on challenging assignments without clear success definitions.
8. **Empathy:** Understanding and connecting with others emotionally is vital for strong leadership. Deliberately seeking out diverse perspectives, asking questions about others' experiences, and building understanding foster empathy.

The Leap to Leader

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The article delves into the mindset required for a successful transition to a leadership role, emphasizing the importance of mental shifts, decision-making, setting expectations, compartmentalization, and self-awareness. Drawing insights from interviews with over 500 executives, the author provides guidelines for aspiring leaders. You can think about it from the perspective of your own development, or as a framework to find and grow leaders in your organization.

KEY POINTS

1. **Mindset Matters:** Success as a top leader is more about mindset than title. The article stresses the need for mental shifts, citing examples of CEOs who overcame initial challenges through mindset adjustment. Its worth reading the full article to get a better sense of the individual experiences.
2. **Clear Values:** As leaders ascend, defining personal leadership values becomes crucial. The article suggests developing a leadership brand by answering questions about core values, lived experiences, and leadership philosophy.
3. **Decision-Making Mastery:** Leadership involves making tough decisions. The article outlines decision-making guidelines, including seeking team input, avoiding logic traps, and providing context for directives.
4. **Performance Expectations:** Balancing performance expectations is highlighted as a leadership challenge. Leaders must set realistic yet ambitious goals, adjusting to the ever-changing external environment.
5. **Compartmentalization:** Leaders need to compartmentalize to maintain focus amidst challenges. Tactics include staying focused on priorities, avoiding being dragged into others' problems, delegating effectively, and occasionally giving oneself a break.



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6. **Self-Awareness:** Leaders must be self-aware, managing emotions, identifying triggers, and addressing blind spots. Constructive feedback and asking for input help leaders bridge gaps between perception and intention.
7. **Crafting Narratives:** The stories leaders tell themselves impact their actions. Overcoming fear of failure, choosing empowering narratives, and avoiding victimhood are crucial for effective leadership.
8. **Continuous Learning:** Leadership is a journey of continuous learning. Leaders should be open to lessons from various experiences, maintain a learning mindset, and embrace the challenges and opportunities the role presents.

Leaders, Sharing Your Own Mental Health Story Can Help You Become a Better Ally

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The article discusses the importance of leaders sharing their mental health stories to reduce stigma, normalize mental health discussions, and transform workplace culture. It emphasizes the benefits of leader ally storytelling and provides best practices for crafting and sharing such stories.

1. **Benefits of Leader Ally Mental Health Stories:**
 - a. Authentic, vulnerable stories reduce stigma and normalize mental health challenges.
 - b. Role-modeling vulnerability positions it as a strength and shows success is possible with mental health challenges.
 - c. Improves the effectiveness of workplace mental health initiatives and encourages open discussions.
2. **Crafting Your Story:**
 - a. Decide whether and how to tell your story based on organizational culture and personal considerations.
 - b. Choose a storytelling format (live, video, or written) based on personal comfort and target audience.
 - c. Speak from the first person, share personal experiences, and reflect on details while ensuring confidentiality.



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- d. Include workplace factors and support mechanisms, emphasizing stigmatized aspects like therapy and medication.

3. Think about the Bigger Picture:

- a. Acknowledge that mental health experiences vary and reflect on the narrative your story reinforces.
- b. Consider the intersectionality of mental health with identity markers and systemic barriers.
- c. Highlight the importance of addressing mental health at work and share organizational initiatives.

4. Consider Your Tone:

- a. Maintain a hopeful tone to inspire those struggling with mental health challenges.
- b. Be specific and authentic, but avoid oversharing potentially triggering details.
- c. Use humor or seriousness authentically, prioritizing genuine communication over perfection.

5. Navigating Reactions to Your Story:

- a. Gratitude and shared experiences are common reactions, but be prepared for varying responses.
- b. Set boundaries if asked to share more, and politely redirect personal inquiries.
- c. Show compassion and offer support if colleagues share their mental health experiences.

6. Encourage a Culture of Openness:

- a. Normalize mental health challenges by being open and transparent.
- b. Inspire a culture change where seeking support is encouraged, and mental health is prioritized.



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CAPTURING COMMITMENTS & KEY LEARNINGS

Who	Commitment / Action	Insights / Learning
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