



25 ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP TIPS

To Help You and Your Organisation Succeed

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Succeed

By sparkChief & Co.

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To the future of true leaders

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Tip # 1: Identify the Type of Leader You Are—Or Want to Be

There are four general types of leadership personalities, each of which can have specific implications for your organisation:

1. “Don’t Rock the Boat” leaders provide acceptable stable growth and deliver results according to agreed-upon plans and budgets. This leader type does not drastically drive significant transformation, innovative initiatives, or exceed objectives. Instead, such leaders deliver acceptable returns from a safe and stable operation year after year.
2. “Perfectionist” leaders are strategic but move slowly while considering all the innumerable potential probabilities of impact on a transformation initiative that could change the company’s direction. Often taking too much time to decide and implement change initiatives, they risk staying behind the curve.
3. “No Strategy” leaders drive change regardless of the impact on the company’s strategy, goals, and vision. Swamped with many small change projects, such leaders often feel overwhelmed with the effort required to bring projects to a successful end. This leader type excels in putting out fires and responding to short-term crises. Desiring to look progressive and proactive, they succeed in looking busy.
4. “Leaders Who Rock” possess the ability to drive major transformational change and innovative initiatives and lead others—not with assumed

authority, but due to their convincing vision and highly compelling ideas and insights about the business. They are not afraid of failure and are willing to take highly complex, yet calculated, risks. Great listeners and experts on knowing to whom they should listen, they spread wisdom and are champions of knowledge sharing. They move fast, relentlessly, with accurate information, and super focus on the best outcome for all—interested in building the best, most profitable, and sustainable businesses for the future.

Which type are you?

Tip # 2: Make Sure the Leadership Role Fits Your Style

Unfortunately, it is still common to give leadership roles to people who are not ready for the position and its accompanying responsibilities. When that occurs, the probability remains significantly high that the person will not be able to handle the authority and will eventually cause collateral damage to people, productivity, and the bottom line.

Leaders appear at all levels of the organisation—senior staff, team leaders, unit supervisors, department heads, division heads, subsidiary presidents, and executives, right up to the CEO. To make the most use of valuable leadership talent and ensure management succession and organisational continuity, the following points are important for you to consider.

1. Make sure that your employees in leadership roles have an excellent track record of driving people behind them, not pushing people below them. A true leader does not solely use authority to make things happen.
2. Create an “open mouth,” not “open door” policy that allows people to freely provide feedback about the person in question at any time (before or after the individual takes on the leadership role). No leader should be immune to periodic peer, supervisor, and subordinate reviews.
3. If the employee is not ready or mature enough to grow as a person, it is senseless to attempt to stretch their abilities. Inevitably, except in circumstances

where the individual exhibits exceptional commitment, the anticipated growth does not appear.

4. Emphasise the importance of leadership roles throughout your organisation, and create and deploy a communication plan that re-iterates the critical attributes of leaders. Illustrate how these roles impact not only the leader or the leader's department but also your entire workforce.
5. Demand full accountability and commitment from the person accepting the leadership role. If the individual is unwilling to commit to perform well, develop others, and behave according to organisation values, then make it clear that there will be consequences. Tying performance to rewards, including the hiring manager, should be accepted practice.
6. If a leader does not show commitment and fails to make an optimal effort, do not appoint that individual to another leadership role with a naïve expectation that the person might do better the next time. People do not usually change easily. You would do better to focus on hiring the right person to do a great job.
7. Spend more and quality time in selecting appropriate leaders. The more right people you hire, the fewer people you need to do a great job; the more wrong people you hire, the more people you need to do a job. The old saying is true: "You get what you pay for," and cheap labour comes with big costs.

Tip # 3: Become a Remarkable Leader

While there are multiple characteristics that effective leaders should possess, the following traits have the potential to result in optimal success for you and your organisation.

- The ability to drive major transformational change and innovative initiatives
- The capability to lead others—not with an assumed authority, but due to a convincing vision and highly compelling ideas and insights about the business
- No fear of failure, accompanied by a willingness to undertake highly complex, yet calculated, risks
- The capacity to listen to what individuals say (or not say)
- The expertise to know to whom they should listen
- The ability to move fast, with accurate information
- A focus on achieving the best outcome for all stakeholders

Tip # 4: Understand the Scope of Key Leader Types

Not everyone in a leadership role wishes to become a key leader, which embodies multiple skills and experience. The important point is to match leadership levels with the right aptitude. Consider the following spectrum of leadership.

1. ***Individual leaders*** are, first and foremost, people who can lead themselves in all aspects of life—family, career, and so forth.
2. ***Community leaders*** can lead a community—for example, a specific function, subject area, or, perhaps, an association of like-minded people—with recognised expertise, knowledge, behavioural competencies, and followers.
3. ***Organisation leaders*** possess the capacity to operate as a community leader, but do so for a complex and sophisticated organisation, within which are interdependent units that can only succeed if they interact smoothly.
4. ***Thought leaders*** initiate innovative and practical thinking to further the success of the business.
5. ***Movement leaders*** can have a significant and positive impact on the business and workforce by moving them, in alignment, toward mutually satisfying goals.
6. ***Domain leaders*** earn respect and possess authority and knowledge of the company's specific industry domain or area of business.

7. ***Visionary leaders*** have the talent to imagine the organisation's long-term potential, seeing beyond the present scenario to the far-off future. They can inspire the organisation and its stakeholders to cooperate toward reaching the same goals.
8. ***Transformational leaders*** use a broad imagination to act on a concept and transform the organisation in ways that ultimately reflect that vision and make it happen.
9. ***Key leaders*** embody the above abilities and possess the multiple talent and skills that can significantly transform the organisation and its workforce in positive and inspiring ways.

You can transition from being a thought leader to a visionary leader, or from being a community leader to an organisational leader, and then upward to a key leader. Another path might involve transitioning from the role of organisational leader to domain leader, or perhaps visionary leader to a transformational leader—and then, again, to a key leadership position. In the best of all worlds, any qualified leader can grow and develop from being a generic leader to a movement leader to a key leader—having a significant and positive impact on the business and workforce by inspiring them to align their activities toward goals that meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Tip # 5: Understand Leadership Roles

Great leaders are like great actors, who can play very different roles. Ordinary leaders are like ordinary actors, who have limited talent and can only accept the same type of roles. Consider the roles that you may play when performing your jobs.

- A dramatic role is necessary when you must address serious or problematic situations that impact your organisation and the workforce.
- You should also be able to handle comedic roles by using humor to break the ice or more easily relate to employees and colleagues.
- Often, you are the star, the main actor who holds the organisational glue together, presenting the “face” of the company to the public and stakeholders.
- A co-star role is also possible, when you wish to step out of the spotlight (or share it) and highlight employees who have contributed positively to the company.
- Cameo, or supporting, roles take place when you step in and out of meetings or projects. Here, your role is to be supportive of whatever the main cast (team) is trying to achieve. You are visible when needed, and invisible when not.

Beyond acting roles, you may also take the parts related to the action. For example:

- Every organisation needs a producer who accepts responsibility for the entirety of the production. Without your leadership skills, the teams' efforts will falter and fail.
- As a director, you understand the company's objectives and ensure that they are carried out, guiding the players and bringing creativity to their efforts. You know when to watch, listen, and intervene in the ensuing action.
- You are involved in stage set and design. Excelling in backdrop, you transparently explain the rationale behind decisions, establish the corporate culture, and set the stage for what is to come.
- Make up and costuming are also part of your role in developing and implementing the company's brand. Successfully selling a unique brand requires innovation and a search for the best presentation of what the company represents.
- Casting, in some respects, is your most significant role. Being able to recognise talent needed, then find and hire the best talent to fit the job, is critical. Having the right talent in the right place at the right time allows departmental units to interact and operate at optimal levels.

BOOST YOUR CAREER AS A LEADER

Tip # 6: Build Your Foundation for Optimal Leadership

As a leader, to be and do one's best, to outperform, requires clear and informed thought processes and actions. A foundation built on the following factors can minimise unnecessary and damaging costs to your employees and the organisation for which you share responsibility.

- **“Transparency”** benefits everyone. The more transparent you are, the better and more effectively you will serve shareholders, customers, and the workforce.
- **“Uncovering Potential”** boosts organisational success. Without tapping into potential and untapped individuals, companies will pay a long-term cost in inefficiency and loss of skills.
- **“Choosing”** involves your need to not limit yourself to one interest, but to focus on the area(s) in which you shine most brightly.
- **“Ask the Right Questions”** means concentrating on the right things by asking the right questions. This effort requires deep contextual understanding of what you are attempting to achieve.
- **“Take Action”** is essential for things to happen. A key ingredient for action is compassion—to change situations for the better and improve the lives of others.

Tip # 7: Improve Your Leadership Opportunities

The essence of any successful business is all about knowing how to bet on the right people. Successful organisations depend on leaders who make the right bets on investments, businesses, markets, products, or technologies—and especially on people. The following points offer some guidance.

1. **Don't Confuse Betting with Gambling.** Gambling is a matter of pure luck, while betting is a matter of strategy. You cannot build and grow sustainable businesses based on pure luck. Betting requires you to be deeply informed about the strengths and influences of all possible factors that might affect the outcome of the process, either positively or negatively. Without leveraging the latest approaches, technology, and critical data to hire, develop, and retain “only” the right people, you are gambling.
2. **Only Remarkable People Can Create Remarkable Things.** If a company uses mediocre and/or archaic hiring approaches and tools, the result will be mediocre hires, productivity, and outcomes. The ability to recognise and understand the type of people hired, developed, and retained to operate and grow the business is mission critical to its future long-term success. While there is no point in placing mediocre people in roles where they are expected to significantly transform and grow the business, placing a remarkable individual into a position where only

consistent, acceptable, and stable growth is required is also not an optimal use of talent.

3. **Only Talented People Can Identify Talented People.** To get talented people, make sure to have talented people who can recognise and select them. The key issue involves unlocking and leveraging the talent in every employee, with the ultimate goal of employing the right individuals willing to align with your goals. Invest in tools and approaches to help identify, engage, and retain the right talent. Implement a training programme to teach employees to recognise other talent, thereby potentially reducing the cost of mis-hires, poor selection, lost productivity, and re-training.

Tip # 8: Build Pillars of Stellar Leadership

The definition of leadership continues to evolve as change drives every aspect of business. Evolution in technology, consumer behaviour, employee expectations, and stakeholder management will force you to modify the way you lead others. The need to upgrade leadership skills is increasingly becoming a necessity and requirement to sustain successful outcomes. The following areas require leadership mastery.

1. **Self-knowledge.** Leaders without a full comprehension of their own capabilities and limits are bound to fade into oblivion. The more self-aware and empowered you feel, the more you can develop better individual performance and organisational results. That self-knowledge works downward through company levels to encourage and support the self-knowledge efforts of your employees. Self-aware leaders, hand-in-hand with self-aware employees, form an optimal partnership toward long-term sustainable success.
2. **Compassion.** Stellar leaders care about people (and themselves); weak leaders drain people. A leader who does not care about others cannot coach, develop, and provide opportunities to others. Without compassion, actions to optimise individual output may fail to achieve the intended goal. Intelligent employees are adept at determining whether your efforts to guide them are shallow and short-term, without regard for their future.
3. **Clarity.** Stellar leaders are clear about where they want to go and with whom they can get there, which

demands a clear mission and well-defined steps to reach objectives. Accompanying a precise roadmap, you acknowledge individuals' skill level, recognising that not all employees have the capability to reach your organisation's objectives. Encouraged by a stellar leader, employees will strive to do their best within the honest limits of their capabilities. The best leaders help individuals find the right position within the organisation or ease them into a better fit elsewhere.

4. **Transparency.** Stellar leaders aim at making objective decisions based on facts and data, not emotions (although intuition, based on valid experience, may come into play). Transparency is the foundation of your decision-making process, as you seek the best results, excluding any bias driven by self-interest. Stellar leaders do not hide behind a title, pronouncing judgment solely due to their status. They listen to knowledgeable experts, gather pertinent facts, consider alternatives and options, and explain the rationale of their decisions through transparent actions.
5. **Credibility.** Stellar leaders are only interested in building "trusted networks" – not just any "network" for the sake of creating one. Building long-term relationships based on mutually beneficial outcomes is at the core of your credibility, offering value for both parties. Honest and transparent efforts to develop sustainable relationships at the top encourage the same action through all levels of the workforce. Stellar leaders do not merely create these networks and walk away, but lead by practical example and action.

6. **Curiosity.** Stellar leaders encourage creativity and embrace open-mindedness to boost innovation and inclusiveness to leverage potential across the company. Individuals reveal different interests and abilities, which should be harnessed to achieve a positive outcome for their personal development and to support the company's mission. As the best idea can emerge from any employee, you should recognise and encourage active participation in all areas. Acknowledge the value of all individuals and their need to voice their ideas and opinions without fear of ridicule.

Tip # 9: Ensure Your Sustainable Career Growth

Motivated leaders seek career growth, not stagnation. But wishing for the perfect leadership position is not the solution. It takes effort, strategy, intelligence, and focus. The principles that follow offer a practical start toward your vision of a sustainable and satisfying career path.

1. Invest in developing a comprehensive strategy instead of short-cuts. Conceiving a strategy to achieve an objective requires deep understanding of what you are trying to do, plus patience, persistence, agility, and commitment.
2. Validate the conceived strategy with others. It is one thing to conceive a strategy based on your knowledge, understanding, and convictions. It is quite another to validate that strategy based on how others perceive it. The more transparent and open you are about your career strategy, the more competitive, supportive, and sustainable it will be in the long run. A broader view from intelligent individuals can help avoid needless errors.
3. Stop doing just anything, and start doing only what needs to be done. In essence, any strategy is all about making specific choices. If the strategy is sound, you know exactly what actions to take to achieve the end goal.

AVOID THESE ACTIVITIES

Tip # 10: Do Not Say These Words to Your Employees

In light of so many buzz words used today, it is important to pause and question some of the common sayings that leaders might use—without considering the implications—when they perform in a leadership capacity. To be truthful to yourself, as well as to those within your responsibility, avoid the following common statements.

1. “We are a family.” If you make this false and misleading statement, remember a key point: “Parents do not fire their children when things don’t work for them.” Business is business.
2. “I am authentic.” Possessing power and authority, you might entertain the idea of being authentic. But authenticity requires enormous transparency. Avoid those words, especially if the company culture might not encourage or support genuine authenticity.
3. “I am looking forward to this new adventure or challenge.” Employees look up to you and need to see confidence about the leadership role and your ability to support the employee as an individual and team member. Simply refer to the honor to have the leadership role and acknowledge the responsibility that accompanies the position.
4. “We should all embrace change.” People equate change to something new, and new equates to something unproven, which is why so many change management projects fail to achieve expected outcomes. People resist change when they do not

know what that change will mean for their circumstances. Honest communication is more efficient.

5. “And let’s not forget to have some fun.” Before making that statement, know whether people enjoy their current roles, what they think about the culture, and how they view their relationship with managers. Make sure that employees truly enjoy what they do, feel comfortable with who they are and want to be, and embrace their current leadership.

Tip # 11: Avoid Leadership Career Mistakes

Everyone, even individuals in leadership positions, make mistakes or errors in judgment. Avoiding the following mistakes can improve your chances for success.

1. Even though the definition of “success” is not clearly defined or communicated, you still expect to be fairly promoted. Some businesses do not provide transparency on what success means in terms of career progression or the company’s financial viability. Without clear communication of goals, the chance to take advantage of growth opportunities becomes exceedingly difficult.
2. Rather than waiting for an invitation, take responsibility to transform your role to actively participate in key scenarios. Discover the rules of the game, make the right connections within successful networks, and step closer toward the action.
3. Most of the time, management passes the “opportunity ball” to the same players. Do not assume that because you are part of a team, you will eventually get to play.
4. Recognise the danger when others silently stop providing encouragement and feedback. Failing to acknowledge this point can hamper your career and result in untenable situations.
5. Develop your career like an entrepreneur rather than wait for someone else to do it for you. By not learning or doing anything to continuously improve your

knowledge, expertise, and exposure to external networks, you naively hurt your chances for success.

Tip # 12: Avoid Leadership Misconceptions

The most essential goal on which all participants in any enterprise should focus is to maximise returns for all stakeholders. Everything else is auxiliary and should support this main objective. The following common (often unintentional) leadership misconceptions can have an adverse impact on an organisation's performance.

1. **Asking Leaders to Set Their Feelings Aside.**
Successful organisations hire people who possess logic and deep human-sensing capability. By telling your employees to set your feelings aside or stop feeling compassion, your employees (and yourself) lose the ability to empathise with others.
2. **Believing Social Responsibility Is an External Act.** Advocating social responsibility in the public eye but neglecting true employee development is hypocritical or indifferent. You first need to ensure that every employee has a sense of belonging in the corporate mission, can develop and grow as an individual, feels rewarded, engages fully, and is willing to creatively contribute and generate value.
3. **Focusing Only on Short-Term Cost Measures.**
Asking employees to be cost conscious, efficient, and productive—then wasting valuable resources by hiring, developing, and retaining the “wrong” people—is not practical or efficient. Consideration of both the near and distant future should accompany every financial decision.

4. **Assuming Talent Has an Age (or, Expiration Date).** Many companies complain about the lack of qualified candidates, yet ignore, downplay, or refuse to consider proactive strategies to retain the most experienced, skilled, and potentially “least costly” employee segment—seniors. Talent has no age, gender, ethnicity, or other classification. Using the experience and skills of this group retains a knowledgeable perspective on where the company has been and where it is going.
5. **Thinking Innovation Is Just a Corporate Programme.** Innovation should be an organic process, whereby all individuals are expected to be inventive and resourceful. Organisations that practice and encourage true innovation are comfortable with the creative process and know that its essence is to develop something new and valuable despite risk.

**FOLLOW THESE ORGANISATIONAL
CONCEPTS**

Tip # 13: Support Transparency

As technology transforms the way we live and work, we are closer to reaching the goal of bringing more transparency to management practices to maximise returns for all. Every field has witnessed three factors that have added to the momentum:

- The need to boost productivity
- The need to increase efficiency
- The need to improve return on capital invested

Technology has also transformed the rules of collaboration, competitive advantage through the democratisation of creativity, and the dynamics of sharing outcomes.

In the end, transparency in management practices will be advantageous for everyone. The more that practices and policies become transparent, the better and more effectively they will serve their shareholders, customers, workforce, and even communities.

Non-transparency triggers huge hidden costs from wasted resources, finances, and time—expenditures that many leadership teams might not be able to evaluate or recognise but that also limit individual and organisational potential to outperform. However, genuine leadership can accelerate this transformation for the benefit of everyone involved.

Tip # 14: Follow Principles for Organisational Change

When it comes to changing an organisation's culture, plans, strategy, and mission, one size truly does not fit all. Yet, many leadership teams overlook the importance of the following key principles regarding organisational change.

1. **The Capacity to See Things the Way They Are.**
Many organisations fail to identify the real challenges they face by not being able to see things the way they are – not as they think they should be. This ability requires transparent management practices, courage, and true leadership.
2. **A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Change.**
Sustainable organisations envision success through a multi-dimensional perspective—in terms of talent, business models, and opportunities.
3. **Play “to Win,” Not Play “Not to Lose.”** There is a significant difference between planning to outperform and simply performing. Change initiatives claim to make things better than before. However, the majority of such claims lack the audacity to outperform. If things were not going well before, there is an opportunity to improve the situation. Playing “not to lose” focuses on defending what already exists rather than on winning.

Tip # 15: Consider These Key Questions About Your Organisation

The transparency movement initiated by technology advancement will inevitably force many organisations to transform – not only the way they conceive strategies, but also how they hire, develop, and retain the right talent to grow sustainable businesses. Failing to recognise this organic transformation may result in catastrophic outcomes for all stakeholders. Consider, with care, your answers to the following key strategic questions.

1. **Are We Really in the “Talent” Business?** Does the organisation really need very talented employees to run the business, or can it achieve acceptable results with average talent? Eroding margins by hiring very talented people and then not using their talent, in essence, defies stakeholders.
2. **Are We Really in the “Brand” Business?** It is almost impossible to build a brand without developing employees. That said, it is critical to focus on building people first – or risk losing valuable talent. Treating the workforce with the same importance and respect as the company brand allows a conceptual shift to something more stable, sustainable, and strategic. Employees, as a form of company brand, should reflect the business by being engaged, motivated, positive, committed, and personal leaders.
3. **Are We Crystal Clear on What Is Possible, Probable, and Most Likely to Happen?** Another critical mistake is overestimating what employees can

“actually” achieve. You have hopes, wishes, and growth expectations, without attempting to know the capabilities of the workforce on which you depend. Be crystal clear about what your teams can possibly target, probably reach, and most likely achieve.

Tip # 16: Embrace the Future Vision of Work

When three significant factors come together—the fast-evolving nature of technology, the transforming workplace dynamic, and the ongoing challenges of unexpected crises—the result is a future work scenario that remains in constant flux. Stepping up to meet the requirements of this new business world, key fundamental traits are emerging. These characteristics have the capability to “make or break” your career or, on a much broader level, your organisation’s chances for survival. Without the following traits as a solid foundation, a leader on a determined career path with a clear view of the organisation’s mission will ultimately fail—or perhaps, simply remain mediocre and unremarkable.

1. ***Suddenness.*** The ability to be comfortable with the fact that things happen and factors change without much warning requires calm, clear thinking. This mindset performs without panic or hasty and mindless decision making, involving flexibility of thought and action to determine the most suitable solution to problematic situations. Using solid data, based on proven methodology, problem solvers explore options without subjective feelings and self-interest factored in, but inserting compassion and passion instead.
2. ***Lack of Safety Networks.*** This talent requires a person, in any field, to work without the guarantee of a safety network to correct or slow potential mistakes. The future workplace demands that you develop self-confidence, knowledge, and guts to consider a

scenario, make a sound decision, and go forward with what needs to be done. Second-guessing choices, or wasting resources and effort on reviewing innumerable potential actions, can only lead to stagnation or worse.

3. ***Uniqueness.*** You and the organisation must demonstrate exceptionality, not simply competitiveness. To perform optimally, consider what makes you unique—the advantages, talents, products, and services you offer. To stand heads above the crowd, simply being competitive—in price, quality, or service—is insufficient and will not lead to sustainable success. Uniqueness imbues a one-of-a-kind difference that only you and your organisation possess and are willing to contribute.
4. ***Contextual Thinking.*** Intelligence, being smart, or earning an advanced degree do not only involve knowledge. To succeed and thrive, people (particularly leaders) must possess the ability to read and comprehend disparate facts and identify trends and patterns without personal bias. Objectivity is an essential trait that encourages and supports sound decision making. Technology, when leveraged, can support this positive outcome by providing requisite information and analytical methodology.
5. ***Relearning.*** Stagnation and disinterest can lead to failed endeavours; that is, if there is even an inclination to make any effort to go forward. The future of work and personal development requires a renewal of spirit and regeneration of mindset and talent on an ongoing basis. Without re-learning, the achievement of goals will eventually fall by the wayside. Re-learning requires personal initiative and

drive, boosted by organisational support, to exhibit the desire to keep broadening your experience and knowledge base.

Tip # 17: Implement Key Elements for Organisational Success

Organisational success—whether financial, cultural, or other aspect—depends on the right combination of key factors. Often-cited tactical components include hiring and engaging the right talent, making transparent decisions, offering competitive total rewards, and others. But a more comprehensive approach—having a broad overview of the end-to-end process that forms the foundation of the organisation’s mission—can prove advantageous. An end-to-end process views a system from its initial starting point to its final step—resulting in an efficient working solution. The functional outcome that emerges is one the organisation can accomplish independently, through the efforts of its own or its network’s capability and resources.

The following elements can positively move the company and its stakeholders toward stellar performance.

1. **The Right Governance.** Leadership roles are critical to grow the business and outperform industry peers, enabling major transformational change and innovative initiatives. You need to develop convincing vision, highly compelling ideas, deep insights about the business and your people—and establish the rules of the game, ensuring that all parties respect the same rules. The right leadership team, tasked with guiding the organisation within a framework, should be fully aligned among themselves and with the governing rules – and not be “above the law.”

2. **The Right Resource Allocation and Incentives.** Smart leaders know how to spend funds wisely, efficiently, and effectively — but strategically allocate resources only on areas that are key to achieve their goals. Management should recognise the importance of allocating resources to garner the most desired outcomes for customer satisfaction, business growth, shareholder value, and employee engagement. “Putting your money where your mouth is” forces everyone to focus on the right shared goals and objectives, with appropriate incentives aligned to these goals.
3. **The Right Knowledge Transfer.** While the largest investment by anyone in and outside of work is knowledge acquisition, it is also one of the least-leveraged and most-quickly-disposed-of asset. The second component of knowledge is transferability. Strong knowledge transfer capability is a key operational and organisational design requirement to leverage goals, efforts, skills, motivation, and engagement across functions, businesses, regions, and so on. That investment should reflect the right transfer of knowledge and skills, along with upgrading and continuously updating those skills.
4. **The Right Organisational Network.** Without guidance and purpose, networks are useless. Having connections for the sake of connections will not drive results. Having not only the right number, relevant, and strong connections encourages more efficient and effective operations. To achieve sustainable, lasting, and supportive connections, you should seek and establish “trusted networks,” which can provide

significantly better exchanges, ideas, opinions, creative solutions, and performance.

5. **The Right Motivation.** Self-motivation is the only sustainable solution to organisational motivation. You need to endorse self-learning and awareness through every company level. Only when employees comprehend what makes them tick as individuals will they support the organisation in achieving mutual goals.

MOTIVATE AND ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES

Tip # 18: Let Talented People Identify Talented People

Of the many key strategies for success, you should focus on encouraging the most talented people in the company to help find and hire the most talented people. Many organisations, at the very best, arbitrarily define a select group of employees as their key talent—the producers, the up-and-coming leaders. However, the question is not who has talent, as everybody does. The real question is how to unlock and leverage the talent in every employee and potential candidates.

The following actions suggest ways to achieve optimal hiring.

- Stop spending money on pushing and pulling people to do a job—especially when it is apparent that they are not engaged, underperform, and drag down the unit's success.
- Start investing in tools and approaches to help identify, engage, and retain the right talent. Find talent within or outside the organisation who can grow the company in the most efficient and productive manner possible.
- Continue to be selective when economic conditions result in a low supply of desired talent. Resist the urge to simply hire a body to fill a vacancy.
- Take the time to team build, engage in meaningful dialogue, listen to what employees say (and do not say), and train managers to “know” their staff. Train employees to recognise the talent needed by the

company, but also encourage them to reach their own potential.

Tip # 19: Know Your Workforce

While having a general idea of the talents and skills of the workforce, you should undertake a more in-depth awareness of individuals. This knowledge can prove advantageous when you face complex decisions regarding short- and long-term goals.

To achieve this awareness, consider the following suggestions.

1. Treat each employee as a new hire. Review the individual's résumé and credentials on an ongoing basis. Consider whether the person is under- or over-qualified for job responsibilities, as well as whether unused skills and interests can be brought to bear on the job.
2. Conduct effective, efficient, practical, well-understood, and accepted performance appraisals. Employees typically cite problems with performance appraisals due to factors such as infrequent feedback, ambiguity, and manager preconceptions.
3. Hold ongoing mentor discussions about what the employee is doing, how well the employee is doing, how the employee fits into the company strategy, and, ultimately, what the employee wants to do. Continuous and engaging one-on-one discussions can invite confidences, boost credibility, and ensure that employees understand their contribution.
4. Conduct focus groups to discuss overall strategy and the direction in which the organisation is headed. Ask

for employee input and ideas. Note which employees are creative and engaged.

5. Provide employees and managers with voluntary self-assessment tools. Although not all people have the time or interest in finding out more about themselves, encourage them to do so. The more a person achieves self-awareness, the more they can contribute positively to their lives, work units, employers, families, and communities.

Tip # 20: Nurture Undiscovered Talent

You should encourage, empower, and pave the way for others to understand the big picture. It is only when people view the overall perspective that they start believing in themselves. Why is this point important?

- You should hire, develop, and retain only employees who believe in themselves first to help the organisation thrive and outperform. There is a strong economic incentive for that approach. It is not just “nice to have,” but a “must have” approach to maximise returns for all stakeholders.
- The foundations for an outperforming business include acknowledging the need for employees to learn to act strategically, empowering them with personal accountability for their lives and careers, and providing leadership support not because it is “nice to do” but “must do” to maximise returns.

With appropriate and genuine support—in terms of expectations, rewards, dialogue, guidance, development, and new approaches—you can nurture a fully aligned talented workforce to become a well-honed, truly motivated resource to drive growth and innovation for decades to come.

Tip # 21: Increase ROI in Your People

A key ingredient of success is getting to know and understand the true needs and desires of your workforce. A failure to obtain this information can lead to the company's long-term detriment and countless unnecessary inefficiencies. To truly maximise returns on your people, focus on investing time and effort in the following areas to facilitate sustainable growth and outperform competition, while engaging with and motivating employees.

1. **Invest in Transparent People Management Practices.** Many organisations lack transparency in management practices by not calculating actual costs or, indeed, making little or no attempt to search for the true impact of nontransparent decisions. Such a lack triggers extensive hidden costs—wasted resources, financial expenditures, and lost time—adversely impacting the organisation and its stakeholders. The only way to make people management more transparent is by becoming more transparent in the decision-making process. Be more open and honest in objective setting, performance reviews, career development, engagement, reward decisions, and promotions.
2. **Focus on the Small Data (Common Sense) to Get the Big Picture.** Learn how to find, choose, and use the information that is relevant to what the company is trying to achieve. Relevant information should be unbiased, objective, and advantageous for all. Although relevant information is often self-evident, many ignore it, which may explain leaders “who

know, but don't act." Focus on listening to sincere stories from employees.

3. **Build Trust, and Don't Throw Trust Under the Bus.** Trust is a very difficult currency to earn. Not many people know how to earn it or what it entails. It takes time to build trust among people and is very easy to lose – especially regarding employees. If hard-earned trust is misused, their trust may prove impossible to regain.
4. **Don't Tolerate or Reward Self-Interest.** Nothing good emerges from serving the interests of only a few individuals rather than the common good. If only a limited number benefit from organisational activity, the resulting impact on the majority of your workforce is likely to reduce motivation, cause poor morale, increase absenteeism, and lower productivity.
5. **Focus on Getting “Only” the Right People to Do the Job.** You cannot/should not attempt to change people's behaviour, as people rarely change. Hiring unqualified or mediocre talent who are unable to meet expectations, even though significant resources are spent in training, is a strategy for failure. Instead, focus on identifying, developing, and retaining only the right people with the right behaviour to grow the business in the right direction—or risk wasting time, effort, and money.

Tip # 22: Hire Multi-Talent Individuals

Smart leaders understand that the future will hold a place for organisations that hire, engage, develop, and retain “only” those individuals who know why they are doing what they are doing, who are committed to contribute positively to the business, and who add value to the organisation.

The future talent market will increasingly favour the most-talented people in multiple domains, not the most-talented in one single area of expertise. The right people will:

- Be in place because they are the only ones with the ability to perform the finest job, due to broad knowledge, experience, and top-notch specialisation (and flexibility to go beyond that specialty).
- Work willingly because they want to be there, not because they have to be.
- Participate in the company, which will enable them to create, contribute, and generate value for themselves and the organisation.
- Have a good working knowledge of many jobs, enabling them to step in where needed.
- Acquire knowledge of different functions by identifying personal strengths and weaknesses, along with specific desires for personal and career development.

Tip # 23: Encourage Creativity

A critical but natural attribute of a multi-talented workforce is creativity. As multi-talented individuals seek self-awareness, knowledge, development, competence, and experience in various domains, they expose themselves to a diverse and challenging pool of problems and solutions. This experience forces them to leverage and use their multiple domain expertise in other areas. By hiring, engaging, developing, and retaining only multi-talented individuals, organisations can, at last, disseminate creativity across all functions of their operation.

Through creativity, the level of innovation and problem-solving accelerates. This positive movement occurs through several key actions.

1. ***Upgrade Skills.*** Severe competition will eventually level the market's playing field, leaving many organisations with few options. Many employees may become unemployed because they have not prepared themselves for the future work environment. Upgrading skills can boost the success and satisfaction of both employers and employees.
2. ***Highlight Creativity.*** By placing creativity at the centre of learning programmes, an unprecedented explosion of innovation is inevitable, simply due to necessity. Creativity and innovation emerge, first and foremost, out of need. The hyper-competitive global economy will force organisations and individuals to seek creative solutions to their problems. Shift perspective so that creativity is no longer “nice to have” or reserved for elite individuals. Creativity

should be the #1 “must have” attribute throughout the organisation, at all levels and in all functions.

3. ***Focus on Self-Awareness.*** Encourage, empower, and pave the way for others to understand the “big picture” as early as possible. By focusing on, hiring, and retaining only self-aware and creative individuals who have faith in their talent, organisations can thrive and outperform the competition.
4. ***Nurture Undiscovered Talent.*** Although the majority are born with the capacity to shape, develop, and live their lives, only a minority have the chance to create (and implement) a strategy or a framework to do so. The real question is not about whether one is creative, talented, passionate, self-aware, mission-driven, well-networked, or action-oriented. The real question involves one’s ability to compile these pieces coherently. Many creative, talented, passionate, committed, and knowledgeable people remain undiscovered because they lack self-awareness and a strategy to create their own big picture.
5. ***Focus on Mindsets, Not Categories.*** Stop defining people in isolated groups. Survival involves similar mindsets that are present in any age group, nation, religion, race, or gender. Increasingly becoming the main source of lasting change, such mindsets represent the new future leaders, heroic enough to dare to change for the better. The “right” mindsets are all about growth and innovation and constant learning.

Tip # 24: Treat Employees Like the Company Brand

The number one reason why many organisations fail to perform or outperform is due to the misalignment of business strategy and people's desires. When goals collide, the usual result is needless consumption and wasted personal and/or corporate resources—particularly when you recruit and hire candidates who do not fit the culture or brand. The concept that you should treat your employees as the most valuable assets is misleading because:

- People are not tangible assets, but are very intangible in many ways. Their value resides mostly in the intangible world, of which we have very limited control. Organisations can definitely contribute to increase the value of that intangible asset, but the only return is goodwill and nothing else.
- Intangibles are called that because they are influenced by many more factors that are not necessarily in our control. Their value is much more unstable than any other tangible assets.

To counter this instability and unknown, treating employees with the same importance and respect as the company brand may represent an excellent starting point that allows a conceptual shift to something more stable, sustainable, and strategic. Employees, as a form of company brand, should reflect the business by being engaged, motivated, positive, committed, and personal leaders.

The key is to only hire those individuals who fit the brand, who believe in the company's goals, and who represent the organisation in its best light to the public and its clients.

Tip # 25: Keep Your Eye on the Right Ball

You should possess the ability to gain and maintain awareness of multiple factors in order to reach optimal decisions that will impact your organisation and workforce. One factor to keep an eye on is the employee base. In other words:

- Keep an eye on the people you hire.
- Keep an eye on the people you trust with accountability to lead.
- Keep an eye on the people you promote.
- Keep an eye on the people you select to fill critical positions.
- Keep an eye on the people who behave wrongly to others.
- Keep an eye on the people whom you have developed and prepared to grow the business for the future.

About sparkChief & Co.

sparkChief & Co. is a boutique management consulting firm that helps organisations to make the most effective strategic business and workforce decisions to accelerate growth.

We do this by helping clients to develop transformation, change management, workforce planning, organisation design, M&A integration, talent strategy, and career solutions. We work with leading companies across a wide range of specialisations, most notably within supply chain and logistics, healthcare, chemicals, financial services, high-tech, and fast-moving consumer goods sectors.

Our mission is to empower business leaders to be innovative and think creatively so they can support employees' efforts to perform at optimal capacity — while simultaneously maximising value for all stakeholders.

Contact us to help you design the most agile organisation to achieve the results you deserve.



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