SPARK

Chapter 3 Exercises:

THE FOUR KEYS TO BEING CREDIBLE

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EXERCISE 1: UNDERSTANDING THE EXPECTATIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS

We all have stakeholders (whether we realize it or not). Stakeholders are individuals in our life who are invested in our success. Stakeholders can include:

- Managers who count on us to do our job well

- Colleagues who need us to collaborate effectively

- Family members who rely upon us for support

- Clients who depend upon us for information

How often do we spend time thinking about whether or not we're meeting our stakeholders' expectations?

When we think about stakeholder expectations, it's quite easy to assume that we're meeting their expectations when we only factor in our own point of view, such as: Of course, my clients think I'm doing a great job! I meet my deadlines, and I check in routinely. That's what I'd want from someone in my position.

We might, however, miss out on opportunities to meet stakeholder expectations when we only consider our point of view — often times, when we attempt to take on the perspective of others, we can start to realize additional opportunities where we can meet expectations, such as: When I consider my role from my client's perspective, I can start to realize that I could be even more helpful if I communicated project updates more consistently. My client shouldn't have to call me for updates, I should be calling them — I bet this frustrates them.

This exercise is for you to spend time considering your role in the eyes of your stakeholders. Start by identifying five of the most important stakeholders in your life (these can be either personal or professional). Then, spend time viewing your role from their point of view. You might uncover some action steps you can take to better meet your stakeholders' expectations.

1   Identify five of your most important stakeholders.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

(2) Spend time reflecting on the below question as it relates to each stakeholder.

Stakeholder's Name	When I consider my role from their point of view, I could meet their expectations better if I...
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

EXERCISE EXAMPLE

Stakeholder's Name	When I consider my role from their point of view, I could meet their expectations better if I...
1 Tim (Colleague)	...spent time reaching out to Tim and asking him if he needs help (before him asking me to help him). His team is going through a difficult change initiative right now. They don't have all the resources they need and rather than observe his frustration, I could see if there is a way for my team to help him.
2 Erica (Direct Report)	... responded to her emails quicker. She depends upon me for information and there are too many times when I don't get back to her because her questions don't feel urgent to me. I need to recognize that by not giving her guidance in a timely fashion, I'm holding her up and she's not able to do her job. I should also let her know it's okay to reach out to me if she's not getting the information. She should know she should never hesitate to give me a call.

EXERCISE 2: SAY–DO GAP DISCUSSION

Do you feel your team is inconsistent? That there's a wide gap between what they say they're going to do and what they actually do? As a Spark, use these questions to start a conversation with your team about making commitments that everyone can keep.

You can host this conversation over coffee or lunch. Share with them that you're reading a book on leadership and you'd like to discuss some of what you're learning. Plan at least 45–60 minutes for the conversation.

When you finish the discussion, ask your colleagues to share actions they're going to take to better manage their Say-Do Gap.

1 The "Say-Do Gap" refers to the space between an individual's actions and their words. The wider the gap, the less credible that individual appears. Can you recall a time in your career when you worked with someone who "over-promised and under-delivered?" Without sharing their name, talk about your experience working with that individual.

2 When you think of the "Say-Do Gap" concept, can you recall times in your career when you had a wider "Say-Do Gap" than you would have liked? Please share.

3 When you feel that you're acting inconsistently, what factors are typically in play — are you busy, not organized, etc.?

4 Teams can also have "Say-Do Gaps," so can organizations. How do you feel our team's "Say-Do Gap" is? When we make commitments, do we keep them? Give examples.

5 What examples do you have of when our team failed to keep commitments? What circumstances usually contribute to our team's failure to keep commitments?

6 What have we learned from these situations and how can we apply this going forward?

7 If there's one thing that you can do to narrow your "Say-Do Gap," what is it? Please share.

EXERCISE 3: CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Hermann Simon, author of "Hidden Champions," researches companies that dominate their market and seeks to identify what factors determine their organizational success. His research concludes that it's not processes or policies that lead to greatness — it's how employees engage in feedback.

High-performing organizations are comprised of individuals (Sparks!) who engage in feedback freely. In these types of organizations, peers share feedback with peers, individual contributors offer feedback with their managers, and managers provide feedback with employees outside of their team or department. This level of candor inspires a culture of accountability, which is only achievable when individuals have the courage to offer feedback.

As a Spark, use these questions to start a conversation with your colleagues/team about feedback and accountability. You can host this conversation over coffee or lunch. Share with your group that you're reading a book on leadership and you'd like to discuss some of what you're learning. Plan at least 45–60 minutes for the conversation.

1 Can you recall a time in your career when someone gave you a piece of feedback — either positive or constructive — that significantly impacted you and inspired a change? What was it and what were the circumstances?

2 Do you feel that you get enough feedback on your performance right now? What type is it — more positive than constructive (or the other way around)?

3 Do you ever hold back from giving someone feedback? What circumstances usually prevent you from providing someone feedback on their performance?

4 Does our organization fear feedback? Are we afraid to hold people accountable to their performance? Why or why not?

5 What do you think would happen if people engaged more freely in offering people feedback (both positive and constructive)? What would be the short-term impact? Long-term impact?

6 If our team offered feedback more freely, what type of results would we expect to achieve?

7 How could we — as a group/team — be a catalyst for inspiring greater feedback in our organization?