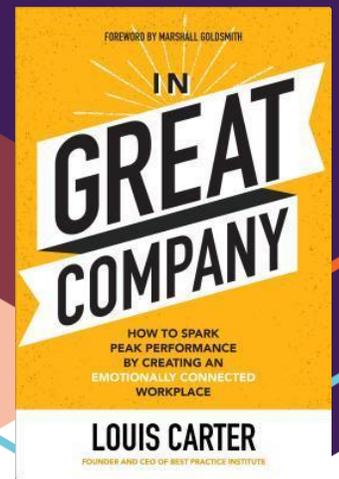


IN GREAT COMPANY

HOW TO SPARK PEAK PERFORMANCE BY CREATING AN EMOTIONALLY CONNECTED WORKPLACE

Carter, L. (2019). *In great company*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill



EADM826.3 September 11th, 2020

Dr. Keith Walker

An Executive Book Summary by Kandice Walker

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A Brief Introduction

Carter (2019) uses his book, *In Great Company*, to teach employers how to forge emotional connections between workers and the company, resulting in overall improvement for both parties.

In Great Company shows leaders how to create a culture of deep connectedness using the SPARK Model: **S**ystemic collaboration, **P**ositive future, **A**lignment of values, **R**espect, **K**iller achievement

The **SPARK** model that Carter uses as a guide provides clear and concise examples of what is required for success.

“You are in great company when you experience a spark that lights your desire for peak performance. This spark comes from the deep emotional connection you feel to you company and the people with whom you work” (Carter, 2019, p. 1).

About the Author

Louis Carter is the founder and CEO of Best Practice Institute (BPI), the award-winning executive leadership development experience, peer network, and research institute with more than 10 000 corporate and individual developing leaders around the world.

He is a chosen member of the Forbes Coaching Council and Marshall Goldsmith Coaches 100.



THE EC EQUATION

Emotional Connectedness (EC)

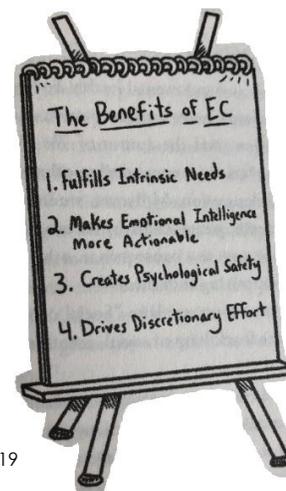
Carter (2019) describes EC as a sense of belonging felt when people see that their work matters to their colleagues and the world around them.

EC = High Performance and Engagement

Increasing evidence points to people needing more from their work than simple economic reward. People need to feel that their work is important and valuable. This will drive them to unlimited innovations (Pink, 2010).

EC is the glue that holds In Great Company and the SPARK together as a management system. It is a mutually beneficial concept that builds over time. It is a continuation of emotional intelligence that creates psychological safety (Carter, 2019).

Leadership, culture and structure are crucial for the success of an emotional connected workplace (Carter, 2019).

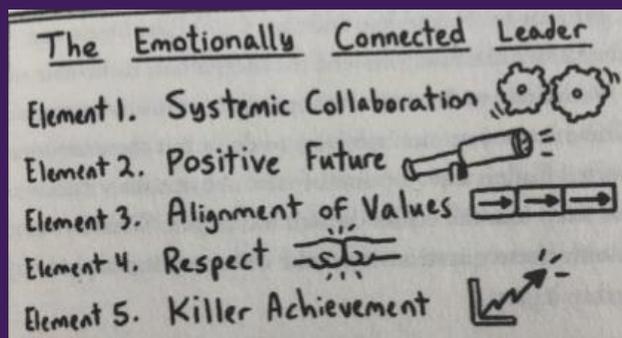


Carter, 2019, p.19

The Emotionally Connected Leader

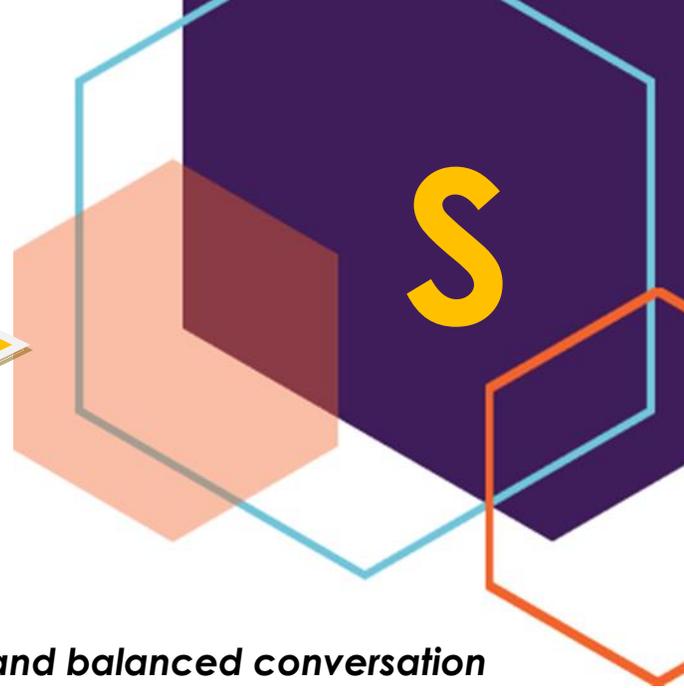
Carter (2019) argues that leaders are the most important piece of the In Great Company model.

Leaders must be the drive behind the change and role model the behavioral norms. He then guides the reader through a self-reflective practice on each of SPARK qualities required to be an emotionally connected leader.



Carter, 2019, p.31

Systemic Collaboration



“Team-based decision-making, cocreation, and balanced conversation become the hallmark of successful working relationships...[and become] part of the fabric of the company’s operational infrastructure” (Carter, 2019, p.53).

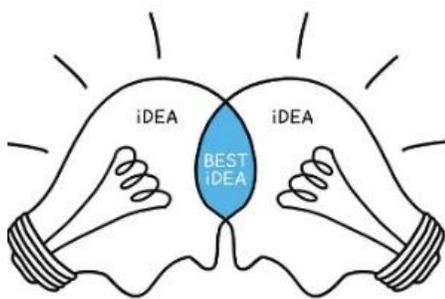
Many examples of successful companies are cited to use systemic collaboration as tools for success: Google, Spotify, ING, Netflix, etc.

Transparency and openness in a work environment are crucial for fostering true collaboration (Carter, 2019).

Avoid these collaboration killers:

1. Lack of trust
2. Weak leadership
3. Manipulation or power dynamics

Carter (2019) provides a “best practices playbook” (p,60) that specifies key ideas and gives examples ranging from Barack Obama’s staff to Atlassian to Airbnb. This chapter focuses on rethinking the idea of teamwork and collaboration to adjust to the modern view of work within companies.



Positive Best Practices	Ground Rules
Equal airtime	Make equal airtime a management priority. Address the collaboration killers. Use an icebreaker. Ensure a balance of team roles. Maintain focus.
Mindful listening	Be fully present. Take a listening tour. Defer judgement. Engage with empathy.
Free flow of information	Incentivize information sharing. Work across functions. Focus on the magic middle. Extend the openness to the outside.
Mix of structure and flexibility	Combine freedom and focus. Use the power of people. Build accountability into collaboration.
Conflict resolution	Don't skip steps. Neutralize the negative. Get beyond the consensus.

(Carter, 2019, p. 79.)

POSITIVE FUTURE

Always looking ahead...



Requirements:

- A specific vision for success
- Processes and philosophy that allow people to contribute
- Meaningful progress and positive transformation

This is the opposite of the ‘business-as-usual’ practices that involve rigidity and micro-management that kill progress (Carter, 2019).

The Best Practices Playbook gives some great guidance on how to foster an atmosphere that has a positive future at the forefront.

Positive Best Practices	Ground Rules
Leverage passion	Let purpose drive passion. Turn passion into products. Let passion pivot. Look for passionate persuaders. Put passion in its place.
Turn change into a positive	Neutralize the pain of change. Get positive with ‘deviants’. Offer more ways to change.
Create space to innovate	Stay future focused. Put risk in perspective. Make innovation for everyone. Be ambidextrous.
Keep workplace practices positive	Create a climate of optimism. Feedforward. Start with <i>yes, and</i> .

Alignment of Values

“Alignment of values informs a company’s culture, exemplifies their reason for being, drives decision-making, and establishes a common framework for how the organization and its employees can grow together and move forward in the future” (Carter, 2019, p. 110).



Carter (2019) uses the company Patagonia as an example of success created when values align. They’ve infused their mission statement with their values, quality and sustainability, with surging success: brand recognition, high sales, and low employee turnover.

The Best Practices Playbook continues to outline key steps for success and examples of accomplishment from a variety of companies.

Alignment of Values:

1. Make values meaningful and memorable
2. Practice what you promote
3. Self-select and self-correct
4. Remember to measure

(Carter, 2019)

Respect

R

“Respect is the quality that people want most... it changes the game” (Carter, 2019, p.138).

Carter (2019) uses supporting research to validate his conviction that respect enhances employee buy-in and credibility.



Respect is both abstract, consideration for self and others, and action. It can mean different things to different people but, no matter the definition, respect connects people and underlies all other requirements necessary for success (Carter, 2019).

Carter, (2019), p. 143.

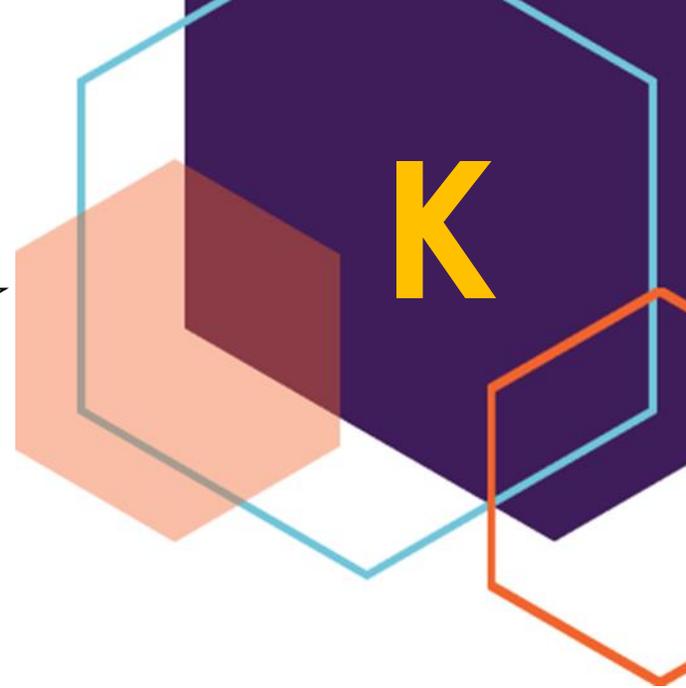


Wegmans is an East Coast supermarket chain that is notoriously people centric. Their culture of respect includes listening, support development and growth, and acknowledging personal lives and individual needs.

Respect creates a circle that keeps people emotionally connected (Carter, 2019).



Starbucks is another company that is well known for practices that emphasize respect.



Once systemic collaboration, positive futures, aligned values, and respect are established in a work culture, emotional connections will follow.

“Success becomes sustainable, self-reinforcing, and almost a force all its own”
(Carter, 2019, p. 159).



Carter (2019) uses Netflix as an example of killer achievement. The company’s climb up the entertainment power ladder is accredited to strategies in the culture deck that emphasizes both *freedom and responsibility*. This paradigm enables constant achievement for its workers.

A Best Practices Playbook is provided to guide leaders to killer achievement.

Positive Best Practices	Ground Rules
Align strategy with structure	Balance focus and flexibility. Communicate goals clearly. Set people free to achieve. Channel feedback for achievement.
Set people up to succeed	Train continuously. Make learning inclusive.
Play to win	Think big. Be best or bust. Have a way to win.
Foster resilience	Focus on strengths. Fall forward. Manage burnout.

5 THINGS TO DO RIGHT NOW

Conclusion

1. **Discovery:** reflect on your individual strengths as a leader and on the organizational health of the company.
2. **Goal Setting:** research, frame, and communicate goals that bring people together.
3. **Coaching:** regular conversations spark emotional connections and clarify roles.
4. **Measurement:** prove changes being made are creating an engaging workplace.
5. **Practice:** continuously practice the SPARK model.

CRITICAL EVALUATION

In Great Company is a book that provides leaders in human resources with concrete examples of success. The SPARK model Carter (2019) employs to guide you through the process of creating an emotionally connected workplace is specific and practical. There are many reflective practices provided in the book that allow for true inspection of strengths and weaknesses.

Carter (2019) reinforces his recommendations with research and relatable examples from notoriously successful companies. He gives methods that create long-term positive changes and personal pride in the work being done.

I would advocate the use of this book for any leader that yearns to create emotional connection in their staff.



Discussion Questions



1. What experiences have you had with leaders demonstrating skills required in the SPARK model?
2. What areas of your life do you experience emotional connection in? Have you ever recognized a feeling of emotional disconnect?
3. Do you think the SPARK model is applicable to all companies? Why or why not?

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