



Developing the Leader Within You

by John C. Maxwell
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Focus

Leadership & Mgt.

Strategy
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Take-Aways

- Show people you care. Lead from the heart.
- Your attitude sets your expectations, which in turn determine your success.
- Leaders inspire others to perform well consistently.
- Don't wait for inspiration to take action.
- Develop the discipline to tackle work and problems systematically.
- Focus 80% of your efforts on the top 20% of your priorities.
- Don't let routine activities swallow your time. Delegate unimportant jobs.
- Encourage and mentor other leaders in your organization.
- If you bring others into the goal-setting process, they will own the vision along with you.
- Change is hard. Explain the need for it to your followers.

Rating (10 is best)

Overall	Applicability	Innovation	Style
7	8	5	7

Relevance

What You Will Learn

In this Abstract, you will learn: 1) Why learning to lead is crucial to your success; 2) What the five levels of leadership are; 3) How to use 10 basic principles that can help you become a leader; and 4) How to develop your leadership skills.

Recommendation

In this early work, leadership expert John C. Maxwell lays out 10 principles of leadership and team building. According to Maxwell, leaders are not born; instead, they develop their skills throughout a lifetime of practice. Perhaps because he was a minister for 25 years, Maxwell is somewhat overly fond of well-worn anecdotes and even ditties, but some readers will find that his charts, pull-quotes, bulleted lists and cartoons help make his ideas easily accessible. *getAbstract* recommends this book to beginning managers who want to learn leadership and to experienced ones who want to progress farther.

Abstract

Learning to Lead

No matter how good you are at your work, how ambitious your goals are, and how much energy and stamina you have, if you're not a leader, none of it guarantees your success, since, "The effectiveness of your work will never rise above your ability to lead and influence others."

A group of people was strolling through a village. When they passed an old man, one of them asked condescendingly, "Were any great men born in this village?" "Nope," the old man answered, "Only babies." The moral of the story: Although some people seem to be "born leaders," most need to learn leadership from experienced role models. You can use the following 10 principles to become a mature leader:

1. "The Definition of Leadership: Influence"

Leaders need followers, whom they attract because of their influence. Everyone has influence with at least a few people. In fact, everyone is a leader at some times and a follower at others. The difference between the average person and the leader is scope. Leadership has five successive components; each one depends upon the one that precedes it.

1. "Position: People follow because they have to" – A title gives you authority, but not necessarily influence. Bosses are not automatically leaders. Instead, your influence grows according to the intensity of your commitment.
2. "Permission: People follow because they want to" – Your followers must also make a commitment; you need their permission to lead. To gain and keep it, you must build solid relationships with them.
3. "Production: People follow because of what you have done for the organization" – Once you've built relationships, you and your followers achieve results together.
4. "People development: People follow because of what you have done for them" – Good leaders are mentors. People follow them because somehow, when they do so, they feel inspired to perform better than usual.
5. "Personhood: People follow because of who you are" – After a lifetime of leadership, you develop personal charisma, and people follow you because of the values you embody.

"Leadership skills determine the level of your success – and the success of those who work around you."

"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Leadership begins with the heart, not the head."

“Integrity is not a given in everyone’s life. It is a result of self-discipline, inner trust and a decision to be relentlessly honest in all situations.”

“There is nothing more difficult to undertake, more perilous to conduct or more uncertain in its success than introducing change.”

“Every new idea goes through three phases: It will not work; it will cost too much; and, I thought it was a good idea all along.”

“Failure only truly becomes failure when we do not learn from it.”

2. “The Key to Leadership: Priorities”

Setting priorities separates successful pros from dilettantes. The “20/80 rule,” or “Pareto Principle,” which says that 20% of your activity yields 80% of your results, comes in handy for managing priorities. Identify your top priorities and put most of your energy into them.

Examine your priorities to create an efficient strategy for success, which is the steady progress toward a goal. Often, you can delegate or even neglect routine activities to give yourself more time for your most important work. To sort your priorities, determine what your job absolutely requires of you, which aspects of it you enjoy the most and which activities yield the greatest returns. Re-evaluate your priorities regularly, since situations change.

3. “The Most Important Ingredient of Leadership: Integrity”

The definition of integrity is simple: say what you mean and do what you say. Putting this into practice, of course, is difficult. Spend time clarifying your deepest convictions for yourself and make them your guidelines for action. Earn others’ trust by setting a consistent, personal example. No one has confidence in a phony or a hypocrite. Take responsibility for your decisions and behavior. As you gain power, you will need to become more accountable – which is why integrity is so important for leaders. Seek out your loyal opposition and take criticisms to heart.

4. “The Ultimate Test of Leadership: Creating Positive Change”

Leaders, like all human beings and even all organizations, resist change. Their character, activities, goals and strategies give them a certain momentum, and redirecting it is like turning an ocean liner. Persuading others to change is even harder. Those who flourished under the old system quite rationally resist changing it. Others are simply set in their ways, and change brings up fears and disrupts their comfortable patterns. Yet the only constant in life is change. If you aren’t growing and changing, you aren’t leading.

To facilitate change, examine your organization’s needs, both technical and motivational. Providing inspiration is key. Before you ask others to change, demonstrate your own willingness to change. Ask others to participate and to share their ideas. They’ll be more likely to support a process they feel they own. Keep the lines of communication open and explain the advantages of the change to all of your stakeholders. Provide psychological support by giving everyone time to think about and assimilate change. If you present the shift as an augmentation or refinement of previous routines, rather than as a total revolution, you’ll encounter less resistance. For example, to guide your staff through an innovation, discuss change in meetings that follow these steps:

1. Discuss “information items” – Highlight successes.
2. Introduce “study items” – Propose new ideas, but don’t rush to a decision.
3. Vote on “action items” – These evolve from the study items.

5. “The Quickest Way to Gain Leadership: Problem Solving”

Every organization has problems. Think of them as gifts because they can teach you valuable lessons. In fact, seek them out. A positive attitude will help you solve problems, but poor attitudes short-circuit solutions more often than the intractability of the problems themselves. Follow these problem-solving guidelines:

“Our focus as a leader should be to build big people. Big people will handle big issues effectively.”

“For your leadership to remain effective, it is essential that you take the other influencers within the group with you to the higher levels.”

“The one who influences others to follow only is a leader with certain limitations. The one who influences others to lead others is a leader without limitations.”

“I have yet to find a person who did not do better work and put forth greater effort under a spirit of approval than under a spirit of criticism. Encouragement is oxygen to the soul.”

- Organize problems in order of priority and deal with them one at a time.
- Learn all you can about the situation. List all the possible causes of the problem.
- Examine the problem within the context of current trends and organizational goals.
- Define the issue. Use just one sentence if possible.
- Discuss the problem with trustworthy, creative colleagues.
- Look beyond your assumptions. Come up with as many potential solutions as you can.
- List the possible solutions, starting with those you think are most likely to succeed.
- Ask others to find the weaknesses in your solutions, but ignore mere opinion. You’re looking for operational weaknesses.
- Evaluate your resources.
- Make decisions.

Although problems may be gifts, you should still implement procedures and policies to prevent them. For example, encourage staff people to think the best of each other, especially during disputes. Bring others into your process by asking them to solve problems with you – otherwise, you’ll end up having to solve all your organization’s problems yourself.

6. “The Extra Plus in Leadership: Attitude”

You may have no control over some things that happen in your life, but you can control your response to them. That’s attitude. When you’re a leader, your attitude influences everyone around you, so nurture a positive approach. Optimism won’t appear automatically or run perpetually. Work every day to replace negative thinking with positive expectations. If you begin to suffer “psychosclerosis,” or a “hardening of your attitude,” the time has come to do some “change work”:

1. Become aware of feelings that could cause a problem.
2. Figure out the source of those feelings.
3. Identify the places where your thinking trips you.
4. Replace poor attitudes with positive ones.
5. Declare your intention to think positively.
6. Make a plan, such as asking a friend for support or associating with positive people.

Don’t wait to take action until you feel motivated or inspired. Chances are that if you “just do it,” motivation will follow.

7. “Developing Your Most Appreciable Asset: People”

Good leaders inspire others to become leaders. They bring out the best in the people around them. Everyone needs encouragement and wants to feel worthwhile. People enjoy the opportunity to contribute to a significant project and they’ll feel grateful if you push them to do well. However, your appreciation of others must be genuine and the project truly meaningful – otherwise you’re simply being manipulative.

Match people with work that suits their strengths. Model the qualities you wish to bring out in others. Expect the best of them and recognize it when you get it. If you need to criticize or correct your subordinates or colleagues, do it in private as soon as possible. Don’t think of the conversation as a confrontation but rather as a clarification. Be constructive.

8. “The Indispensable Quality of Leadership: Vision”

Vision is necessary to accomplish any great goal. It focuses everyone’s energy. Developing a vision requires you to think on three levels: “perception,” or understanding current

“People want to join in a group or pursue a cause that will have a lasting impact. They need to see that what they are doing is not wasted effort, but is making a contribution.”

“The danger of power lies in the fact that those who are vested with it tend to make its preservation their first concern.”

reality; “probability,” or extrapolating from the present to the near future; and “possibility,” or envisioning the organization’s best potential. The following 10 personality types may impede the development of your vision and the realization of your goals. Shield yourself from people with these attitudes:

1. Their ideas aren’t big enough.
2. They are literal-minded.
3. They are dogmatic.
4. They feel too discouraged by previous failures to try again.
5. They are complacent.
6. They adhere to tradition for its own sake.
7. They fear being different.
8. They see problems everywhere.
9. They are too selfish to see beyond their own needs.
10. They fear failure.

9. “The Price Tag of Leadership: Self-Discipline”

Discipline means doing what you need to do when you need to do it. With discipline, you can prevent work from piling up and overwhelming you. Developing desirable personality traits requires the same kind of discipline as controlling your workload. Stay organized, set priorities and tackle your self-work one project at a time. As a leader, you will have duties you don’t enjoy – but successful leaders don’t allow their emotions to control them. Having a good character is a choice you make and a strength that you build upon every day.

10. “The Most Important Lesson of Leadership: Staff Development”

Since you are only one individual, you need a support team to multiply your efforts and achieve your goals. Getting the right person into the right position is crucial to organization building, especially if the organization is small. When you believe in the members of your team, you’ll help them believe in themselves, which will boost their level of accomplishment. Help your team function smoothly by following these five guidelines:

1. Make assumptions clear.
2. Give every team member an opportunity to shine.
3. Praise team members for their progress.
4. Provide advice and help.
5. Reward team members for their contributions.

Don’t worry whether team members like you; worry about whether they respect you. Keep criticism constructive and ask your team members for their input. Keep them informed. Give them the game plan and the support they need to play their part. Build teamwork into the rules and procedures of your organization. Help employees advance by coaching them. Let them know what you expect and review their performance regularly.

About The Author

John C. Maxwell develops leadership materials and has consulted for *Fortune* 500 companies and professional sports organizations. He is the author of *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* and *The 360 Degree Leader*.