



Becoming a Person of Influence

How to Positively Impact the Lives of Others

by John C. Maxwell, Jim Dornan
Thomas Nelson © 1997
214 pages

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Take-Aways

- Successful people are influential.
- Trust is the most critical component in relationships.
- A good reputation is priceless.
- Integrity cannot be bought and should never be sold.
- Most people are filled with self-doubt.
- Listening is more important than talking.
- Caring managers always help their employees succeed.
- Carefully select those you wish to mentor.
- Mentoring is a manager's most powerful tool.
- Some people are not interested in being mentored.

Rating (10 is best)

Overall	Applicability	Innovation	Style
8	9	6	7

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Relevance

What You Will Learn

In this Abstract, you will learn: 1) How people of influence can change other people; 2) Why people of influence never compromise their integrity; and 3) What steps you can take to become an influential person.

Recommendation

This book holds a wealth of practical knowledge for those who want to move up the corporate food chain. But even if you don't have professional ambitions and simply want to be a better human being, you've come to the right place. John C. Maxwell and Jim Dornan start with the basics, teaching that honesty, integrity, unselfishness, kindness and understanding are crucial components of any relationship, business or personal. They believe that as you strengthen your character, you will enjoy a more fulfilling and productive life, at home and at work. Since they reframed some concepts to fit chapter themes, the material is repetitive at times, but it is spiced with entertaining anecdotes and glimpses of business celebrities (such as Sam Walton). *getAbstract* thinks up-and-coming leaders will want this on their reading lists, along with Maxwell's other boosters.

Abstract

Making an Impact

You don't have to be an elected official, star athlete, TV host or corporate executive to influence others. You have an impact on many people every day at home, at work and socially. But if your goal is to be really successful and positively affect others, you must become "a person of influence." Football coaches win games when they motivate and empower their players. Sales managers meet their quotas by encouraging and inspiring their salespeople. Moms and dads raise courteous and respectful children by setting good examples.

Your degree of influence is not the same with everyone. For instance, newspaper editors have a greater impact on their reporters than on the IT folks who maintain the company's computers. You have more influence over your children than you do over the others kids on the playground.

You cannot become influential overnight. This is an incremental process that occurs over time; it can take years. Your influence on the people around you can be either positive or negative, but you can change a negative influence to a positive one with work and focus.

The four escalating levels of influence are:

1. **"Modeling"** – People are influenced by first impressions and what they hear about you. You can enhance or tarnish your image over time. People also emulate, idolize and admire sports celebrities and actors, even though they don't really know their true characters.
2. **"Motivating"** – Your impact on others increases as you connect emotionally and begin to build relationships. People enjoy interacting with you and believe that they benefit from the experience.

"If your desire is to be successful or to make a positive impact on your world, you need to become a person of influence. Without influence, there is no success."

"If a good reputation is like gold, then having integrity is like owning the mine."

“If the foundation of integrity is weak or fundamentally flawed, then being a person of influence becomes impossible.”

“Not until people can completely trust you will you be able to positively influence them and have an impact on their lives.”

“When you nurture people and add value to them without expecting anything in return, they feel significant.”

“The moment that people know that you care for and about them, the way they feel about you changes.”

3. “Mentoring” – You’ve decided to play an active role in the lives of others by aiding in their professional and personal growth. You actually see them changing and reaching their potential.
4. “Multiplying” – People you have influenced become role models themselves. This level is difficult for mentors to achieve because it requires more time and energy.

Recognizing your role as a person of influence is essential, regardless of whether you affect five or 500 people. More importantly, you have the power to strengthen your influence and make a lasting difference in people’s lives.

Start with Integrity

Nothing is more important in relationships than integrity. Long-term success in business is virtually impossible to achieve unless you are truthful, upright and moral. A person with integrity does not differentiate between embezzling millions of dollars and plucking the morning paper from the neighbor’s driveway. People of influence are guided by principles that remain constant.

Integrity means admitting it when you are wrong, putting others ahead of yourself, making decisions that may not be in your personal interest, fulfilling promises, and being genuine, humble and gracious. Trust is built on integrity. You cannot become a person of influence if people do not trust you. Resolve to strengthen your integrity. Never compromise your core principles and beliefs.

Decide how you will react to a moral dilemma before it occurs. Twenty-five years ago, Johnson & Johnson lost an estimated \$100 million when it recalled all Tylenol products after tampering by outsiders poisoned several consumers. The company’s swift response not only demonstrated integrity, but also resulted in an unexpected public-relations boost from an appreciative public.

Show Faith in People

Good executives understand that positive feedback is a powerful motivator in the workplace. Employees thrive on encouragement and compliments. In fact, many studies have shown that employees value recognition more than anything else – even money.

Nurturing managers show genuine concern for their employees and are determined to help them succeed. Vince Lombardi, the famous Green Bay Packers coach, was a tough disciplinarian who always demanded 100% performance. But it was the love between Lombardi and his players that made the Packers perennial champions.

Caring managers respect their employees and always welcome input. Managers who discourage a free exchange of ideas stifle growth and create an atmosphere of distrust. Employees want to feel important and optimistic about the future. They need to be given opportunities to succeed. Focus on each person’s strengths. Limit negative comments. Remember that most people battle self-doubt; they have little faith in themselves. Showing confidence makes people try harder. Place people in positions where they can succeed. Play to their strengths. Continue to offer encouragement, even when they fall short. Always act as an advocate for your employees and all the people close to you.

Hear Ye, Hear Ye

Many people are so intent on expressing their own thoughts and opinions that they overlook the fundamental component of communication: listening. The late Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart, once rode 100 miles with a Wal-Mart truck driver so he could have a conversation and learn.

“It’s been said that a person can live 40 days without food, four days without water, four minutes without air, but only four seconds without hope.”

“Relationships cause people to want to be with you, but respect causes them to want to be empowered by you.”

“The reality is that difficulties seldom defeat people; lack of faith in themselves usually does it.”

“Weak leaders sometimes get so caught up in the vision of where they’re going that they forget the people they’re trying to lead.”

Successful salespeople have long understood how important it is to listen to your customers. Being a skillful listener is one of the keys to interpersonal relationships. Self-centered individuals who constantly talk about their accomplishments and interests rarely cultivate intimate bonds.

People with reputations as good listeners are magnets that draw other people. They are patient, open and nonjudgmental; they offer feedback wisely. Good listeners pay close attention, maintain eye contact and note body language. Listening requires energy and focus. You can’t listen effectively if you’re surfing the Internet, organizing the papers on your desk, thinking about Saturday’s errands or glancing at people parading past your office door. If you can’t devote the proper attention to a conversation, set another time to speak with that individual.

Good listening skills are valuable. Try not to interrupt when others are speaking. When there is a pause, verbally summarize what you’ve heard and ask questions for clarity. Resist the urge to jump in and offer solutions. People only want to unburden themselves. Offer advice or your opinion only when appropriate.

Reach an Understanding

Listening is wonderful – especially when it leads to understanding. Understanding is the ability to appreciate another person’s viewpoint without being judgmental. People often are so intent on expressing their thoughts they don’t really hear the other person. Celebrate your differences. People with dissimilar personality traits often forge strong relationships because of their complementary qualities.

People want to be validated, even if you totally disagree with their viewpoints. Make it easy for employees to make suggestions and observations. Fear of rejection creates reluctant participants. Your belief and understanding can have an enormous impact on someone’s life.

Guiding Light

Motivated individuals still need guidance and direction. They don’t always know where their strengths lie. As a mentor, recognize the possibilities in others and pinpoint opportunities for them to grow. But mentoring requires selectivity; you can’t mentor everyone. Choose individuals who share your basic philosophy and values. Pick those who have the greatest potential and will benefit most from your good counsel.

As you move forward, provide those you lead with resources for their self-development. Share an inspirational book or tape. Expose individuals to meetings and seminars with inspiring people. Spark their passion so they become self-motivated. Like the captain of a ship, plot a course for those you are mentoring. They may not know how to get from one place to another or the best route to take. Teach your employees to address their problems one at a time, calmly and logically. Always be available to support them.

Some people who have not yet succeeded mistakenly believe that achieving their business goals will solve all their problems. Part of your job is to prepare them for the reality that success can add to life’s complications. Successful people have less time, more pressure and increased demands. Adjusting to success may be painful as well as joyful. Also, help your people see that money is not a cure-all, rather it, too, can create problems of its own. In one survey of more than 1,200 people, 39% indicated that finances are their biggest ongoing problem.

“The act of empowering others changes lives, and it’s a win-win situation for you and the people you empower.”

“Trust is the single most important factor in personal and professional relationships.”

The Magic of Empowerment

Nordstrom department stores enjoy a reputation for outstanding customer service because their employees feel empowered. The company has only one rule for its workers: “Use your good judgment in all situations.” Human beings respond favorably when treated as intelligent adults who are capable of making informed decisions.

Empowering people requires having power over them. Nordstrom employees, for example, would not respond to a district manager from Macy’s. You also must have the respect and admiration of those you wish to empower. Always take your role model responsibilities seriously. People are looking to you for guidance. Your encouraging words and unconditional support are powerful motivators.

The essence of empowerment actually occurs when you delegate authority. Insecure leaders who feel threatened by the very individuals they are mentoring do not want to relinquish control. Being unwilling to institute change diminishes a mentor’s effectiveness. Mentors should publicly acknowledge that they have confidence in up-and-coming leaders and expect them to succeed. Mentors need to meet regularly with their people to provide feedback, correct errors and offer advice.

Your primary goal is to set your people free and enable them to succeed independently. You’ll derive great satisfaction, strengthen your organization and perhaps even create more flexibility in your schedule. Empowerment properly executed makes everyone a big winner.

Passing the Baton

Consider yourself a rousing success if those you mentor go on to also become influential people. In fact, the greatest testament you can receive is when a protégé comes to know more than you know. Developing effective leaders affirms your management philosophy and ensures a more secure future for your company. Failure to establish a line of succession can cripple even the most successful businesses. Always keep an eye out for potential leaders. Once you identify them, make sure they are interested in developing their leadership skills. They also should be willing to mentor others in the future.

Continue to hone and refine your leadership skills. Take advantage of educational opportunities, such as conferences and seminars. Stay current with your reading; pay attention to the latest books on business development and management. Make personal growth a priority.

Influential people and developers of leaders always put the team first. They don’t chase after individual glory. Often, the public measures an athlete’s value by his or her ability to elevate others. Former pro basketball star Bill Russell of the Boston Celtics judged his performances by whether he made his teammates play better. You can be like Russell and become a person of influence.

About The Authors

John C. Maxwell is a leadership expert and speaker who has sold millions of books, including his bestseller *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Jim Dornan is president of an international company that coordinates business seminars and training, and develops software, databases and publications.