



# Talent Is Never Enough

Discover the Choices That Will Take You Beyond Your Talent

by John C. Maxwell  
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## Focus

Leadership & Management  
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## Take-Aways

- Many people have talent, but there is nothing special about talent alone.
- Talent is only the starting point on your journey. Make more of it.
- To reach your goals, enhance and extend your talent.
- Many companies claim they cannot find talented individuals to hire. What they really seek are people who have fully maximized their talents.
- Individuals who optimize their talents can achieve extraordinary things.
- To enhance your talent, make the right choices in life.
- Become a “talent-plus” person by developing 13 significant attributes.
- Start with belief, passion, initiative, focus, preparation, practice and perseverance.
- Also build your courage, teachability, character, relationships, responsibility and teamwork to become a talent-plus person.
- Maximizing your talent is hard work, but the payoff is tremendous.

## Rating (10 is best)

| Overall | Importance | Innovation | Style |
|---------|------------|------------|-------|
| 7       | 5          | 6          | 7     |

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## Relevance

### What You Will Learn

In this Abstract, you will learn: 1) Why talent is meaningless without effort; 2) What “talent-plus” self-development entails; and 3) How to become a talent-plus person by building 13 important character traits.

### Recommendation

The professional sports world is filled with athletes who have extraordinary talent and yet end up with mediocre careers. Of course, every field has people who have failed to achieve their individual talent potential. Why? Talent alone is not remarkable. In fact, it is commonplace. What is special is “talent plus,” the term leadership author John C. Maxwell uses to describe the achievement level of people who maximize their talents. Maxwell says you must add effort to talent to make it matter. He describes 13 sterling attributes people should strive to build within themselves to maximize their talents. *getAbstract* recommends his message to those who coach, mentor or encourage others. In any business or activity, Maxwell contends, talent “is only a starting point.” How you develop your talent is what counts, and this book will show you how.

## Abstract

*“As long as there are people in the world, there will be plenty of talent. If that were enough, everyone would reach their potential. What’s missing are things people need in addition to their talent.”*

*“Society’s landscape is strewn with people who could have been great – those who show amazing promise but never reach their full potential.”*

### Are You a “Talent-Plus Person”?

Talent is ordinary. Everyone has talent of one sort or another. The trick is to develop and enhance your talents and maximize your abilities so you can reach your goals. You will accomplish more if you focus on improving your talents than you will if you spend time worrying about your weaknesses. Talent is important, but your life choices are even more vital. Talent-plus people make the right choices to enhance their talents and achieve their full potential. To become a talent-plus person, develop 13 pivotal personal characteristics: “belief, passion, initiative, focus, preparation, practice, perseverance, courage, teachability, character, relationships, responsibility” and “teamwork.” Consider them one by one:

1. **“Belief lifts your talent”** – To get ahead, you must have faith in yourself. Consider Joe Namath, the New York Jets quarterback who took his underdog team to the Super Bowl in 1969. Knowledgeable observers thought the mighty Indianapolis Colts would crush the Jets. But Namath, self-confident and armed with hours of studying his opponents’ game films, was having none of it. “The Jets will win Sunday. I guarantee it,” he said. Namath was right. The Jets won 16 to 7. How did they prevail and shock the sports world? Namath’s boundless confidence – and preparation – had a lot to do with it. He believed in himself and in his ability to lead his team, for good reason. To reach your full potential, you also must have confidence in yourself. When it comes to individual possibilities, most people just scratch the surface. As Mohandas Gandhi said: “The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world’s problems.” Have confidence that you are capable of great things.
2. **“Passion energizes your talent”** – As a child in Miami, Arizona, Rueben Martinez had a passion for reading. His Mexican immigrant parents, who were copper mine workers, didn’t share his passion for books. His small town had no public library.

*“Too many talented people who start with an advantage over others lose that advantage because they rest on their talent instead of raising it.”*

*“The toughest thing about success is that you’ve got to keep on being a success. Talent is only a starting point in business. You’ve got to keep working that talent.”*  
(Irving Berlin)

*“You will become on the outside what you believe on the inside.”*

*“People’s lives change when they change something they do every day.”*

Martinez woke each day at 6:45 a.m. when he heard the newspaper – thrown by the paperboy – thud against his neighbor’s house. He would get out of bed, rush next door, read the whole paper, and carefully fold it and put it back. At 17, he moved to Los Angeles, eventually trained as a barber and opened his own shop. Still a passionate reader, he started a lending library in his barbershop with his own collection of 200 books. When people failed to bring the books back, he started selling them instead. Now, he owns three bookstores, including Librería Martinez Books and Art Gallery, which has sold more than two million books and is a leader in Spanish-language sales. It holds thousands of books and one remaining symbolic barber chair. Martinez turned his passion for reading into a major enterprise. To be happy and energize your talent, focus on your passions.

3. **“Initiative activates your talent”** – The Northridge earthquake, which struck near Los Angeles’ San Fernando Valley on January 17, 1994, caused “\$44 billion in damage.” It demolished a section of Interstate 10, the world’s busiest highway. Experts predicted that California would lose \$1 million daily while I-10 was shut down. Right after the disaster, then-Governor Pete Wilson seized the opportunity to rebuild the road as quickly as possible. Work began only a few hours after the disaster. The C.C. Myers construction company, hired by the state to rebuild I-10, also showed great initiative, perhaps in pursuit of the state’s generous bonus for early completion. Its crews worked 12-hour shifts around the clock. When workers became fatigued, C.C. Myers hired more people. The company cut its job completion time in numerous inventive ways. When railroad executives informed the contractor that they could not deliver steel beams in less than three weeks, C.C. Myers hired its own trains. The state originally set a 140-day deadline for the project. C.C. Myers completed the job in an unbelievable 66 days. Do you seize the initiative in work and life? If not, just getting started demonstrates strong character and enterprise.
4. **“Focus directs your talent”** – Bird hunters know that to kill a lot of birds, you do not shoot wildly at a flock in flight. Instead, you aim and shoot at one bird, then another, then another. That is, you focus your shooting. Concentration is important in every field. How do you do it? First, make sure every action you take counts. Don’t make excuses for yourself. Don’t let the past rule the present. Think of today as a new day; forget whatever went wrong yesterday. Establish priorities, commit to them and stick to them. Never quit until the job is done. Stay focused at all times to put your talent to work.
5. **“Preparation positions your talent”** – In 1804, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark headed an overland expedition from the eastern United States to North America’s Pacific Coast. This mission eventually led to the westward expansion of the United States across the North American continent. Commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson, the Lewis and Clark expedition was to be a scientific endeavor. In preparation for the journey, Lewis studied under Jefferson’s guidance and learned from experts in geography, medicine, botany and fossils, as well as celestial navigation. Without such careful preparation, the mission would have ended in disaster. Do you fully prepare for your challenges? Before any undertaking, ask yourself what you need to do and how you should do it. Such preparation leads to profitable results.
6. **“Practice sharpens your talent”** – As a boy, Charles Dickens knew that he wanted to become a writer. But since his family was poor, he did not get much schooling. By age 12, Dickens was earning money for his family by “gluing labels on bottles.” However, he did not give up on his dream. He worked as a law clerk at 15 and then studied stenography (he called it the “savage stenographic mystery”) on his own, becoming a court stenographer at 18. Then, he worked at newspapers, where he

*“A talented person who is part of a team – in the right place on the right team – becomes more than he ever could on his own.”*

*“We live in a culture that overvalues talent and undervalues responsibility.”*

*“The first and greatest obstacle to success for most people is their belief in themselves.”*

*“People are like icebergs. There’s much more to them than meets the eye.”*

practiced hard to become a capable reporter. He subsequently moved on to creative writing and developing “sketches” of people under the penname “Boz.” This led to the publication of his first book *Sketches by Boz*. Dickens soon became the world’s most popular author. One thing led to another, then another, until he attained his goal of becoming a writer. How did he do it? Through hard work, honing his writing skills and practicing his craft. To build your skills, practice. Take the time you need to develop yourself. Ask for help to become better.

7. **“Perseverance sustains your talent”** – Even as a young child, Vonetta Flowers was a remarkable runner. She was a track star in high school and college. As a young woman, she trained hard to make the 2000 U.S. Olympic track team, but she failed. Then, her husband, Johnny, told her about a notice he saw inviting people to try out for the U.S. Olympic bobsled team. At first, Flowers was not interested. She had spent 17 years training to compete in the summer Olympics in track. She didn’t know anything about bobsleds and had never ridden on one, but she gave it a shot. Her track skills stood her in good stead. After two years of training, Flowers competed in the bobsled races at the 2002 winter Olympics. She and her teammate won the gold medal. Her persistence paid off. Perseverance is about determination, not destiny. “Life is not a long race but many short ones in succession.” When you persevere, you don’t let anything get between you and your goal. Thomas Edison once said, “Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.”
8. **“Courage tests your talent”** – Philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson declared, “Whatever you do, you need courage.” No matter what you want to accomplish, you need backbone and grit. If a difficult challenge blocks your way to your goals, stand up to it. Cowards run at the first sign of trouble, but people with courage keep going. How? Don’t they feel fear? Of course they do, but as aviator Eddie Rickenbacker stated, “Courage is doing what you’re afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you’re scared.”
9. **“Teachability expands your talent”** – You do not need vast talent to get ahead. If you are open to learning, you can develop your knowledge and abilities until you outshine those around you. Put yourself in a position where you can learn about something that truly interests you. Once you start educating yourself, never stop. As journalist Sydney J. Harris said, “A winner knows how much he still has to learn, even when he is considered an expert by others.” Don’t hesitate to let others know that you still have a lot to discover and don’t hesitate to let others teach you. Make productive use of the ideas you pick up.
10. **“Character protects your talent”** – Hwang Woo Suk, a South Korean genetic scientist, became famous in 2004 when he announced that he had cloned human embryonic stem cells. The next year, Hwang said he cloned a dog. Korea’s Ministry of Science and Technology dubbed him, “Supreme Scientist.” Then things began to come apart. Scientists started to question Hwang’s research methods. A scientific journal that had published his work “issued a retraction.” Seoul National University set up a panel to examine Hwang’s findings. In 2006, it said Hwang had fabricated his stem-cell work. A later investigation dug into how he had used \$2.6 million in research funds. He and his team really were the first to clone a dog, but nothing else was true. That May, a court indicted Hwang “on embezzlement and bioethics law violations.” How is this possible? Hwang is a brilliant scientist. His talent helped him to gain worldwide fame, but his character let him down. Character is the essential bedrock of your talents and abilities. If it is weak, it will betray your talents. Your character is your creation. Fortify it.

*“When a man has put a limit on what he will do, he has put a limit on what he can do.”  
(Charles Schwab)*

*“Do what you can with what you have, where you are.” (Theodore Roosevelt)*

*“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself Any direction you choose.”  
(Dr. Seuss)*

11. **“Relationships influence your talent”** – During his singing career, country music star Johnny Cash won 11 Grammys and sold millions of albums. He made a fortune as an entertainer and influenced such talents as Elvis Presley. Unfortunately, in addition to boundless talent, Cash had a heavy addiction to pills. They almost ended his life. Despairing that he might never overcome his addiction, Cash tried to commit suicide by crawling deep into Tennessee’s dangerous Nickajack Cave where numerous explorers had died, unable to find their way out. Deep inside the bleak, black cave, his flashlight dead, Cash had a religious experience. He decided that he wanted to live. Turning around in the dark, Cash somehow crawled back out of the cave. His mother – who came from California because she “knew” something was wrong – and singer June Carter were waiting outside. For months, Carter and Cash’s mother helped him recover from his depression and get off pills. Later Carter and Cash married, but Cash relapsed into his addiction. Carter stayed with him and helped him overcome his dependency again. Many years later, their daughter Roseanne Cash, asked her mother why she always went out of her way to help troubled souls like her father. Carter said, “Well, honey, we just have to lift [them] up.” All the talent in the world is not as important as people who help you when you are down. Develop your talents, but cherish your relationships.
12. **“Responsibility strengthens your talent”** – Gene Marine, editor of Ohio’s *Bellefontaine Examiner*, once sent a young sports reporter to write a story about the latest game. The reporter came back empty handed. “Where’s the story” Marine asked. “No report,” said the reporter. “Why not?” asked Marine. “No game,” replied the reporter. “No game? What happened?” asked Marine. “The stadium collapsed,” replied the reporter. “Then where’s the report on the collapse of the stadium?” asked Marine. “That wasn’t my assignment, sir,” the reporter replied. Even the most talented individuals often fail to assume responsibility when it presents itself. Such responsibility may offer a unique opportunity. Don’t shirk it. Accept it gladly, so you can enhance your talent while opening new vistas in your life.
13. **“Teamwork multiplies your talent”** – *Rocky* is an Academy Award-winning film about a boxer. The movie’s hero, Rocky Balboa, describes his romance with Adrian, his girlfriend: “I’ve got gaps. She’s got gaps. But together we’ve got no gaps.” This is an eloquent description of a team where people with different abilities and shortcomings work together. Teamwork breaks down the job and “multiplies the effect.” Teams make the most of a leader’s abilities and they deliver talent-plus.

### **A Talent Shortage?**

*Money* magazine recently reported that the world is experiencing a severe talent shortage. Its story said that four out of 10 employers surveyed in 23 countries claimed they couldn’t find talented people to fill their jobs. The story may be accurate as far as it goes, but if employers cannot locate talented people, it is not because such people do not exist. The world is full of people with talent. Any shortage exists because many talented people have not yet “made the choice necessary to maximize their talent.” Plenty of people have talent, but not enough of them are talent-plus individuals who’ve decided wisely to develop their talents. Now, make the decision to go the distance for yourself.

## **About the Author**

**John C. Maxwell** is an author and speaker on leadership. His books, which have sold more than 12 million copies, include *The Difference Maker*, *Be All You Can Be* and *Failing Forward*.