



Executive Summary

Leadership Gold

by Dr. John C. Maxwell

John C. Maxwell has been hailed as America's premier expert on leadership. Each year he speaks in-person to hundreds of thousands of people, while his bestselling books impact the lives of millions more around the globe. GiANT Impact multiplies his influence to corporate leaders in more than twenty countries through world-class events, training, and resources.

Introduction – Searching for Gold

Leadership Gold brims with nuggets of wisdom accumulated by John C. Maxwell during 30+ years of studying, practicing, and teaching leadership. Having wanted to write this book for years, John waited until turning sixty so that its content would contain only his “best of the best” leadership insights. Throughout its pages, you’ll encounter John’s passionate belief in the value of leadership, and you’ll benefit from his unique talent for articulating principles of influence.

Chapter 1: If It’s Lonely at the Top, You’re Not Doing Something Right

Loneliness isn’t a requirement of leadership; it’s a consequence of selfishness. If you’re a leader and you feel isolated, then you’re doing something wrong. Only self-centered leaders travel alone. Good leaders stay close to their people in order to sense their needs and know their dreams. These leaders define success as taking their entire team to the top.

Chapter 2: The Toughest Person to Lead Is Always Yourself

To be successful in any endeavor, we need to learn how to get out of our own way. Blind spots hamper our leadership by obscuring the habits and behaviors that are holding us back. If we don’t develop self-awareness, then we’ll keep bumping into the same roadblocks. When we are foolish, we try to conquer the world, but as we gain wisdom, we begin to concentrate on conquering ourselves.

Chapter 3: Defining Moments Define Your Leadership

The choices we make in critical moments form us and inform others about our true nature. Defining moments put us in the spotlight. During crises, we don’t have time to put a spin on our actions. Whatever lies inside of us is revealed to everyone. Handled well, a defining moment can cement a relationship and bond leaders and followers together for life. Handled poorly, a defining moment can cost a leader her credibility and end her ability to lead.

Chapter 4: When You Get Kicked in the Rear, You Know You’re out in Front

When you’re at the front of the pack, everything you do attracts attention. Criticism comes with the territory. Regardless of position or profession, all leaders undergo criticism and must learn to handle it constructively. Whether the criticism has legitimacy or not, a leader’s attitude determines whether he grows from it or groans under it.

Chapter 5: Never Work a Day in Your Life

Following your passion is the key to finding your potential. You will not achieve the latter without pursuing the former. Passion keeps leaders going when others quit. It's contagious and influences others to follow us. It propels us through tough times, fueling us in a way that talent and wisdom cannot. Choose to do what you love, and make the necessary adjustments to allow passion to infuse your work.

Chapter 6: The Best Leaders Are Listeners

Leaders dignify their followers by paying attention to their input and concerns. By using what they hear to make improvements that benefit the organization, leaders win the trust of their followers and encourage their participation. Also, by demonstrating open ears to their teammates, leaders lift morale and empower everyone to voice their ideas.

Chapter 7: Get in the Zone and Stay There

Discover what you do well and keep doing it. Success begins by knowing your purpose in life and growing to your maximum potential in your strength zone. When you've done so, then you're positioned to make the greatest possible contribution to the lives of those around you.

Chapter 8: A Leader's First Responsibility Is to Define Reality

One of the pitfalls that can stop potential leaders is the desire to focus on vision to the detriment of facing reality. Good leaders balance their dreams with a sturdy dose of realism. They guard against unfounded optimism by heeding the defects of their organizations and paying attention to potential problems that could hold them back.

Chapter 9: To See How the Leader Is Doing, Look at the People

Leaders inevitably make things better or worse for the people who follow them. For good or for ill, leaders always impact their people. If you want to know whether a leader is successful and effective, don't look exclusively at her. Look to the health of the people she leads.

Chapter 10: Don't Send Your Ducks to Eagle School

Your people won't all make the most of the opportunities you give to them. In any organization, some people have high potential, while others are limited in their ability to grow. Recognize that people differ in the level of their natural abilities, and do not treat everyone the same. Focus on attracting and grooming eagles, and don't waste your energy trying to turn low-capacity people into something they are not.

Chapter 11: Keep Your Mind on the Main Thing

You'll wear yourself out trying to be an expert at everything. For leaders, it's better to know the most important things than to know everything. 80% of your productivity comes from 20% of your efforts, so be sure to prioritize your time on the activities that yield the greatest return.

Chapter 12: Your Biggest Mistake Is Not Asking What Mistake You're Making

If you want to wring every drop of experience out of your mistakes, then accept them as the price of progress. Inevitably, you'll fail. When you do, insist on gleaning insight from your failures. Leaders who are willing to learn from their mistakes seldom repeat them.

Chapter 13: Don't Manage Your Time—Manage Your Life

Time is an equal-opportunity employer; everybody gets 24 hours a day—no more, no less—but not everybody gets the same return on their 24 hours. Successful people understand that time is the most precious commodity on earth. As a result, they continually analyze how they are using the moments in their day, and they look for ways to be more efficient.

Chapter 14: Keep Learning to Keep Leading

The secret to success can be found in people's daily agendas. If they do something intentional to grow each day, then they move closer to their potential. If they don't, then their potential slowly slips away over the course of their lifetime.

Chapter 15: Leaders Distinguish Themselves During Tough Times

The best leaders prove their merit in the crucibles of life. Others may withdraw or retreat under pressure, but not leaders. They step forward to make tough choices, and they assume responsibility for the decisions they make. In times of difficulty, leaders resist the temptation to make the popular decision, choosing to do what's right rather than what's convenient.

Chapter 16: People Quit People, Not Companies

The desire to leave for greener pastures is often motivated by the need to escape someone. People quit leaders, not companies. If employees perceive that their leaders are more concerned with protecting a position than developing their people, then they will eventually find someone else to work for.

Chapter 17: Experience Is Not the Best Teacher

Experience teaches nothing, but evaluated experience teaches everything. Reflection turns experience into insight so that lessons can be learned from the past. When analyzed, our false starts and failures can be portals to wisdom. However, if left unexplored, they will bring us nothing aside from disappointment.

Chapter 18: The Secret to a Good Meeting Is the Meeting Before the Meeting

Most meetings are tremendous time-drainers. They fill up the schedules of everyone involved, but seldom lead to concrete progress. To make meetings worthwhile, figure out the key decision-makers who are involved and connect with them prior to the meeting. Getting on the same page as them will help the official meeting to run smoothly and productively.

Chapter 19: Be a Connector, Not Just a Climber

Leaders are hard-wired to climb. They're initiators, activators, and have an eye for opportunity. Most leaders are competitive, and the desire to reach the top is embedded in their DNA. Unfortunately, getting to the top without connecting with people undermines a leaders' influence. Leadership founded on ambition or position is short-lived. The best basis for a leader's influence comes from the relationships he or she establishes with followers.

Chapter 20: The Choices You Make, Make You

Perhaps our greatest power in life is the power to choose. Without question, choices are the most determining factor in how our lives turn out. Successful people make right decisions early and manage those decisions daily.

Chapter 21: Influence Should Be Loaned but Never Given

As you grow in leadership, people will approach you to ask that you extend your influence on their behalf. Be careful not to give out your influence unconditionally. Handing influence to people who can't or won't use it appropriately is a waste of time, effort, and resources. Instead, treat your influence like a loan. Make sure those who borrow it are qualified to receive it, hold them accountable for how they use it, and expect to see a good return on what you've provided.

Chapter 22: For Everything You Gain, You Give Something Up

The greatest obstacle to growth as a leader is letting go of what you have so that you can reach for something new. The higher we go, the harder it becomes to make tradeoffs since we have so much to risk giving up. However, when we cling to what we have, we inevitably stall our growth and plateau.

Chapter 23: Those Who Start the Journey with You Seldom Finish with You

Those closest to you now may not always be at your side. Your best hope is to be prepared as people leave and to maintain the right perspective during transitions. Anytime you ignore the reality of change and try to control relationships you will have problems.

Chapter 24: Few Leaders Are Successful Unless a Lot of People Want Them To Be

We venerate great leaders, and we have the tendency to assume their accomplishments came about regardless of the assistance they received from others. The truth, however, is that no leader would be great without the support and help of teammates. As a leader, you will never get ahead until your people are behind you.

Chapter 25: You Only Get Answers to the Questions You Ask

Confidence can be defined as that uplifting, energizing, positive feeling that you possess—before you truly understand your situation. Inexperienced leaders often exhaust themselves by making mistakes that could be avoided if they would only consult a wise, more-seasoned mentor. Seek to gain insight and

perspective from the experts in your field. Listen in order to learn, and glean from the experiences of others.

Chapter 26: People Will Summarize Your Life in One Sentence—Pick It Now

Someday, each of us must depart this Earth. When we do, our lives will be condensed into an epitaph or brief obituary. If you are intentional about creating your legacy now, then people at your funeral won't have to wonder what to write about you. Your legacy will be clearly spelled out for them based upon the way you lived your life.