



The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership

Follow Them and People Will Follow You

John C. Maxwell
Nelson Publishers © 1998
256 pages
Book: getab.li/5948

Rating

7 9 Applicability
4 Innovation
8 Style

Focus

Leadership & Management

Strategy
Sales & Marketing
Finance
Human Resources
IT, Production & Logistics
Career & Self-Development
Small Business
Economics & Politics
Industries
Global Business
Concepts & Trends

Take-Aways

- Strengthen the potential of your organization by developing leaders instead of followers.
- Lead from your own personal integrity.
- No matter how many followers you have, try to connect with them individually.
- Make each action accomplish more than one goal.
- People follow the leader first, then they follow the leader's plan.
- If you intend to change course, give your organization's leaders time to accept the shift and to begin to build consensus with their followers.
- Sometimes your best use of power is to give it away.
- Real leaders accept nothing less than victory.
- Leadership requires sacrifice all along the way.
- For the good of the organization, prepare other leaders to take your place.

Relevance

What You Will Learn

In this summary, you will learn: 1) How to use basic principles of leadership; and 2) How to build your organization.

Review

Frequent motivational author John C. Maxwell, a former pastor, squarely based these 21 laws of leadership on enduring values. These guidelines are meant to inspire, not innovate, as they offer techniques to make leading by principle a practical reality. Maxwell's straightforward, insightful rules are well worth the time you will spend reading them. *getAbstract* recommends this gem of simplicity as a game book for building stronger teams and becoming a better leader.

Summary

"True leadership cannot be awarded, appointed or assigned. It comes only from influence and that can't be mandated. It must be earned."

"Personal and organizational effectiveness is proportionate to the strength of leadership."

"The Law of the Lid: Leadership Ability Determines a Person's Level of Effectiveness"

Brothers Dick and Maurice McDonald had a talent for the restaurant business. As American culture became dependent on cars, they developed methods to serve food to customers on the run. They eventually streamlined their business, and primarily sold hamburgers. People in the restaurant business traveled to their hamburger joint to learn their efficient methods.

Yet, the McDonald brothers failed when they attempted to franchise their idea. Why? Because they lacked overarching leadership ability. Their partner, Ray Kroc, had the vision and skill to make McDonald's a marketplace phenomenon. Dedication to success is important, and so is talent and intelligence, but without leadership ability, you'll only get so far.

"The Law of Influence: The True Measure of Leadership Is Influence - Nothing More, Nothing Less"

True leadership cannot be bestowed, it must be earned. In 1996, a London Daily Mail poll showed that the public considered Mother Teresa and Princess Diana to be the most caring two people in the world, though neither held political office. People listened to them, and they used their influence to accomplish great things.

Leading and managing are two different tasks, but the idea that good managers make good leaders is a common misconception. Leaders influence people while managers focus on running smooth operations. Entrepreneurs are not necessarily leaders. Even innovators may lack the ability to build organizations. Another misconception is that being first, being given a leadership job, or having great knowledge makes you a leader. Only hard work and dedication can do that.

"The Law of Process: Leadership Develops Daily, Not in a Day"

If you cannot identify the subjects you're ignorant about, you won't know what you need to learn. Once you figure that out, you can begin to develop your leadership skills by filling in the gaps in your knowledge. As your knowledge grows, so will your leadership ability. As you absorb leadership lessons, leading will become second nature. Real success comes from building your enterprise day by day.

"If you're starting in a new position and you're not the leader, don't let it bother you. The real test of leadership isn't where you start out. It's where you end up."

"The higher you want to climb, the more you need leadership. The greater the impact you want to make, the greater your influence needs to be."

"How do leaders earn respect? By making sound decisions, admitting their mistakes, and putting what's best for their followers and the organization ahead of their personal agendas."

"Being able to navigate for others requires a leader to possess a positive attitude. You've got to have faith that you can take your people all the way."

"The Law of Navigation: Anyone Can Steer the Ship, But It Takes a Leader to Chart the Course"

Leadership requires planning and forethought. Consider what you are asking others to follow you into doing. Preparedness is the main secret of this law. Decide what you're going to do, and tell key staff members your goals. Allow time for them to accept the course you've proposed. Be prepared for problems, but always highlight their successes. Each day, review the course you've set.

"The Law of E.F. Hutton: When the Real Leader Speaks, People Listen"

The person with the title, the one running the meeting, may not be the real leader. True leadership depends on influence. The man or woman to whom people listen is the actual leader. Real leaders have strength of character, build good relationships and know a lot about their work. They have strong intuition and plain, raw talent.

"The Law of Solid Ground: Trust Is the Foundation of Leadership"

The trust of your followers is your most valuable asset as a leader. People want to believe in your character. If you make a mistake and don't acknowledge it, you will breed mistrust.

"The Law of Respect: People Naturally Follow Leaders Stronger than Themselves"

Strong people look for strong leaders, based on respect and depth of character. Harriet Tubman, an African-American abolitionist, was very short, she lacked two front teeth and she never dressed well. Despite her appearance, people respected her enormously. In time, some of the country's most important people invited her into their homes to seek her counsel.

"The Law of Intuition: Leaders Evaluate Everything with a Leadership Bias"

Intuition is a difficult quality to define. You develop intuition over time, through experience, but you must be ready to implement it in a heartbeat. Intuition enables leaders to read their circumstances, other people and available resources, and to integrate that understanding so they can act specifically within a broader context. Intuition offers a creative way to connect problems with solutions by viewing every situation through the lens of leadership. Apple's Steve Jobs is an excellent intuitive leader. He has an uncanny ability to present innovations that capture consumers' imagination. He views every technology, every partnership and every employee as a resource he can use as he leads his company into new markets.

"The Law of Magnetism: Who You Are Is Who You Attract"

Generally the people you attract will have qualities that are similar to yours. They will generally share your attitudes, values, abilities and life experiences. If you're not attracting the people you want, examine your leadership skills to find any areas that need improvement.

"The Law of Connection: Leaders Touch a Heart Before They Ask for a Hand"

To communicate your message, you need to connect with people on an emotional level. Even when you face a room full of people, remember that they are individuals; connect with them as separate people.

Some of the greatest military leaders made it their business to connect individually with their troops. Robert E. Lee spent time around the campfires with his men on nights before big battles. General Norman Schwarzkopf said in his autobiography that one Christmas during the Persian Gulf War, he "must have shaken 4,000 hands." By taking the trouble to connect with their soldiers individually, these leaders ensured that they had their followers' support.

"The Law of the Inner Circle: A Leader's Potential Is Determined by Those Closest to Him"

To make your organization more effective, seek strong leadership potential among the people who form your inner circle. Don't devote your time to trying to convince or inspire people who have a negative attitude. Invest your energy in those who share your vision. Populate your inner circle with individuals who boost morale and help make your load lighter.

"The Law of Empowerment: Only Secure Leaders Give Power to Others"

Henry Ford had an incredible vision. The car he manufactured changed modern life. And yet, he was so personally insecure that he could not keep himself from undermining the other executives at the Ford Motor Company. He would empower subordinates only to cripple their authority later. Worries about job security usually prevent leaders from empowering other people, but the ability to develop other leaders makes you invaluable to your organization. Abraham Lincoln named his political rivals and critics to his cabinet because he wanted the benefit of advice from leaders as strong or stronger than he was. When you empower others, you lift them up and, in the process, you elevate yourself.

"The Law of Reproduction: It Takes a Leader to Raise Up a Leader"

Some leaders are naturally gifted. Others rise to the occasion in response to crisis. However, the vast majority of leaders are inspired and mentored by other leaders. The best mentors for potential leaders are experienced leaders. You can only give to others what you already possess. Many leaders don't see the value of generating other leaders, and may try to hold other people down at lower ranks. Be careful; the only way to limit or demote others is to lower yourself. Raising new leaders is essential for the full development of your company. The more leaders your firm has, the stronger it is, but that requires careful nurturing. As Ross Perot once said, "Leaders don't flock. You have to find them one at a time."

"The Law of Buy-In: People Buy into the Leader, then the Vision"

Mahatma Gandhi was one of the greatest leaders of all time. He led his native India to independence. He advocated nonviolence as the most effective weapon against oppression. Convincing people of this idea was terribly difficult, and yet millions followed him. Why? Because they believed in him as a leader, so they adopted his vision and his plan. Many people think vision comes first, but it doesn't. When followers are making up their minds, the leader comes first. Build your credibility as a leader and then work on persuading others to share your vision.

"The Law of Victory: Leaders Find a Way for the Team to Win"

Winston Churchill spoke out against the Nazis as early as 1932, but those who led England at that time decided to pursue a reconciliatory path. When Churchill became Prime Minister in 1940, he plainly stated his position against Nazism. He made it clear that he intended to lead England to victory and that defeating Hitler was the only acceptable outcome. Despite incredible odds, Churchill did not give up until the Allies were victorious. Even a leader who is dedicated to victory must realize that winning is usually a team endeavor. Improving the team's play leads to victory. Achieving victory requires a cohesive vision, a variety of skills and a dedicated leader exhorting his team to leave it all on the field.

"The Law of the Big Mo: Momentum Is a Leader's Best Friend"

To go anywhere, you must be in motion. Ongoing momentum makes it easier to overcome challenges and obstacles when they occur. A leader must generate momentum, but once it starts, it is hard to stop. Momentum inspires followers to perform.

"Character makes trust possible. And trust makes leadership possible."

"Hire the best staff you can find, develop them as much as you can, and hand off everything you possibly can to them."

"Mark Twain once remarked that great things can happen when you don't care who gets the credit...I believe the greatest things happen only when you give others the credit."

“When leaders have momentum on their side, people think they're geniuses. They look past shortcomings...Momentum changes people's perspective of leaders.”

“Just as in sports a coach needs a team of good players to win, an organization needs a team of good leaders to succeed. The larger the organization, the stronger, larger and deeper the team of leaders needs to be.”

“The leader finds the dream and then the people. The people find the leader and then the dream.”

"The Law of Priorities: Leaders Understand that Activity Is Not Necessarily Accomplishment"

First analyze your obligations. Identify those areas where your strengths are greatest and, as much as possible, delegate the rest. Understand where your greatest passions reside, because they provide your motivation. Being active doesn't necessarily mean you are accomplishing the right things, so setting priorities is crucial. Ideally, each action you execute will satisfy more than one priority. To prioritize, determine what you absolutely must do, what activity generates the largest gain and "what brings the greatest reward." To maximize your effort, focus on the most productive areas.

"The Law of Sacrifice: A Leader Must Give Up to Go Up"

Sometimes you have to be willing to give something up so you can move ahead. You may be forced to take one step back in order to take two steps forward. Often that means working around the clock without compensation or appreciation. Sometimes the sacrifice is even greater. When Lee Iacocca took over Chrysler, he couldn't stop the company's downward trend toward bankruptcy without drastic action. As a last resort, he asked the federal government to bail out the company. He opened himself and Chrysler up to attack and ridicule. To set an example, he reduced his yearly salary to one dollar. He asked Chrysler's executives to sacrifice as well. Because of that mutual sacrifice, they turned Chrysler around together. Getting where you're going will require sacrifice. Staying there requires even more sacrifice.

"The Law of Timing: When to Lead Is as Important as What to Do and Where to Go"

So often, timing has a tremendous impact on the outcome of a battle. Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter was elected president in 1976 because voters identified with him as a Washington outsider. It was "the right time" in U.S. history for an outsider to win. The country was wary, disillusioned by Vietnam and Watergate. Chances are that Carter would not have been elected at any other time, but timing favored the underdog in 1976.

"The Law of Explosive Growth: To Add Growth, Lead Followers - To Multiply, Lead Leaders" - Leaders who develop other leaders multiply their own potential and activate the law of explosive growth. John Schnatter, founder of Papa John's Pizza, explains, "It's my job to build the people who are going to build the company." His COO, Wade Oney, adds, "The key is to develop leaders. You do that by building up people." You can groom leaders one by one, but for faster growth you can also enlist leaders who will bring their followers along, multiplying your growth.

"The Law of Legacy: A Leader's Lasting Value Is Measured by Succession" - In 1997, Coca-Cola's CEO Roberto Goizueta died unexpectedly. This kind of crisis is often hugely destabilizing, but Goizueta had prepared for his company's welfare in the event of his absence. As a result, Coca-Cola remained strong. By growing leaders, you amplify your company's potential today and provide for its sustained success in the future.

About the Author

Consultant and former pastor **John C. Maxwell** writes frequently about leadership and regularly gives workshops on leadership principles. He is the author of several other books, including *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork* and *Winning with People*.