



# Leadership Gold

## Lessons Learned from a Lifetime of Leading

By John C. Maxwell, Thomas Nelson Books, 2008

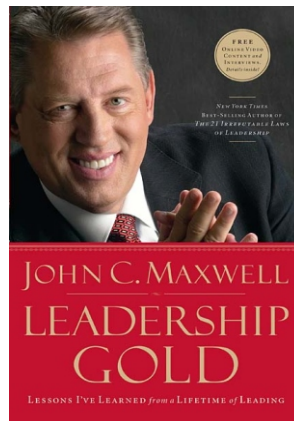
Hit the Mother Lode!

Smart leaders learn from their own mistakes. Smarter ones learn from others' mistakes – and successes.

John C. Maxwell wants to help you become the smartest leader you can be by sharing Leadership Gold with you. After nearly forty years of leading, Maxwell has mined the gold so you don't have to. Each gold nugget is one of twenty-six chapters designed to be a six-month mentorship from the internationally renowned leadership expert.

Each chapter contains detailed application exercises and a "Mentoring Moment" for leaders who desire to mentor others using the book.

Gaining leadership insight is a lot like mining for gold. You don't set out to look for the dirt. You look for the nuggets. You'll find them here.



### About John C. Maxwell

**John C. Maxwell** is an internationally recognized leadership expert, speaker, and author who has sold over 16 million books.

EQUIP, the organization he founded has trained more than 2 million leaders worldwide. Every year he speaks to Fortune 500 companies, international government leaders, and audiences as diverse as the United States Military Academy at West Point, the National Football League, and ambassadors at the United Nations. A New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and Business Week best-selling author, Maxwell was named the World's Top Leadership Guru by Leadershipgurus.net.

He was also one of only 25 authors and artists named to Amazon.com's 10th Anniversary Hall of Fame. Three of his books, The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, Developing the Leader Within You, and The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader have each sold over a million copies.

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## Why You Need This Book

This book has leadership thoughts that will quicken your pulse and stir your heart. It will help you learn more about leadership that will make a difference in you and will make a difference in the lives of others.

## If It's Lonely At The Top, You're Not Doing Something Right

If you find yourself too far from your people, wither by accident or by design, then you need to change. True, there will be no risks. You may hurt others or be hurt yourself. But if you want to be the most effective leader you can be, there is no viable alternative. Here's how to get started:

### 1. Avoid Positional Thinking.

If you are in a leadership position, do not rely on your title to convince people to follow you. Build

relationships. Win people over. Do that and you will never be a lonely leader.

### 2. Realize the downside of success and failure.

Success can be dangerous but so can failure. Anytime you think of yourself as "a success," you start to separate yourself from others you view as less successful. You start to think, I don't need to see them, and you withdraw from any contact with them.


Ironically, failure also leads to withdrawal, but for other reasons. If you think of yourself as "a failure," you avoid others, thinking, I don't want to see them. Both extremes in thinking can create an unhealthy separation from others.

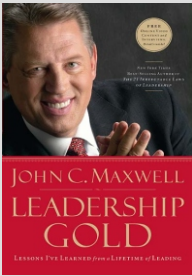
### 3. Understand that you are in the people business.

The best leaders know that leading people requires loving them. Ineffective leaders have the wrong attitude, saying, "I love mankind. It's the people I can't stand." You must like people or you will never add value to them.

### 4. Buy into the law of significance.

The Law of Significance in The 17 Indispensable Laws of Teamwork

 **About the Book**



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**254 pages**



states "One is too small a number to achieve greatness." No accomplishment of real value has ever been achieved by a human being alone.

## Defining Moments Define Your Leadership

Leaders become better leaders when they experience a defining moment and respond to it correctly. The difficulty with defining moments is that you don't get to choose them. However, you can choose how you will handle them when they come, and you can take steps to prepare for them.

### Here's how:

#### 1. Reflect on Defining Moments from the Past.

The best teacher for a leader is evaluated experience. To predict how you will handle defining moments in the future, look at the ones from your past.

#### 2. Prepare for Defining Moments in the Future.

One of the most valuable things he has done in his life is to make major choices before times of crisis or decision. This has enabled him to simply manage those decisions in

critical moments of his life.

#### 3. Make the most of Defining Moments in the Present.

Opportunities come with risks but, don't be afraid to take them. It is in moments of risk that the greatest leaders are often born.

## Get In The Zone And Stay There

Whenever you see people who are successful in their work, you can be rest assured that they are working in their strength zone. But that's not enough if you want to be successful as a leader.

Good leaders help others find their strength zones and empower them to work in them. In fact, the best leaders are characterized by the ability to recognize the special abilities and limitations of others, and the capacity to fit their people into the jobs they will do best.

If you desire to be an effective leader, you must develop the ability to develop people in their areas of strength. How do you do that?

Study and know the people on your team. What are your people's strengths and weaknesses? Whom do they relate to on the team? Do they love what they do and are they doing it well? These are questions that must be answered by the leader.



Communicate to individuals how they fit on the team. The more that people know how they fit on a team, the more they will desire to properly make the most of their role and maximize their contribution.

Communicate to all team members how each player fits on the team. If you communicate to all the players how all the people fit together and what strengths they bring for their role, then, teammates will value and respect one another.

Emphasize completing one another above competing with one another. Healthy competition between teammates is good. It presses them to do their best. But in the end, team members need to work together for the sake of the team, not only for themselves.

## Your Biggest Mistake is Not Asking What Mistake You're Making

If you want to learn to fail successfully and handle the mistakes you do make with maximum profit, then you need to do the following five things:

**1. Admit your own mistakes and weaknesses.** The first step toward anticipating mistakes and learning from the ones you do make, is to take a realistic look at yourself and admit your weaknesses. You can't improve as a leader if you're too busy trying to pretend you're perfect.

**2. Accept mistakes as the price of progress.** Psychologist Joyce Brothers asserts, "The person interested in success has to learn to view failure as a healthy, inevitable part of the process of getting to the top." Nothing is perfect in this life – and that includes you! You'd better start getting used to it. If you want to move forward, you're going to make mistakes.

**3. Insist on Learning from Your Mistakes.** Author and leadership expert Tom Peters writes, "From the smallest branch to the corporate level, there is nothing more useless than the person who says at the end of the day, as their own report card, "Well, I made it through the end of the day without screwing up."

**4. Ask yourself and others, "What are we missing?"** Some people expect nothing but trouble. They are pessimistic, so they don't bother to look for anything good. Others, like Maxwell, have a natural tendency to assume that everything is good. But either kind of thinking can hurt a leader. Leaders need to be more discerning than that.

**5. Give the people around you permission to push back.** The best leaders invite the opinions of the people on their teams.



## Leaders Distinguish Themselves During Tough Times

How do you know when you're facing a tough call and need to be at your best as a leader? You'll know when a decision is marked by these three things:

### 1. The tough call demands risk.

Leaders have to be willing to do things that others are unwilling to do. They have to put themselves on the line.

### 2. A tough call brings with it an inward battle.

Often, that internal battle occurs far from the spotlight of leadership, and casual observers aren't even aware that it's happening. Doing the right thing isn't always easy, but it is always necessary if a leader wants to have integrity and be effective.

### 3. A tough call will distinguish you as a leader.

Only the very best leaders can lead effectively in such situations. It is during those tough times that they make the toughest decisions and really distinguish themselves as leaders.

## People Quit, Not Companies

No matter how good a leader you are, you will occasionally lose people. That's simply a part of leadership. However, you can do things to make yourself the kind of leader that other people want to follow. Here are the things Maxwell does to remind himself that people quit people, not companies:

1. I take responsibility for my relationships with others. When a relationship goes bad, I initiate action to try to make the relationship better.

2. When people leave me, I do an exit interview. The purpose of the interview is to discover if I am the reason they are leaving. If so, I apologize and take the high road with them.

3. I put a high value on those who work with me. It's wonderful when the people believe in their leader. It's more wonderful when the leader believes in the people.

4. I put credibility at the top of my leadership list. I may not always be competent; there are times when every leader finds himself in over his head. However, I can always be trustworthy.

5. I recognize that my positive emotional health creates a secure environment for people. Therefore I



will think positively, practice right behavior toward others, and follow the golden rule.

6. I maintain a teachable spirit and nurture my passion for personal growth. I will keep learning so I can continue leading. If I keep growing, I will never become the "lid" on the potential of my people.

### The Secret to A Good Meeting is The Meeting Before The Meeting

Most people have the wrong idea about the purpose of a meeting. Maxwell thinks a lot of us think of them as time savers. You pull a bunch of people into a room so that you can deliver a message once.

That's the wrong way to think about a meeting. Meetings are for getting things done! To do that, you must often have a meeting before the meeting to prepare people for the meeting. Here's why:

The meeting before the meeting helps you to receive buy-in. Most people are down on what they're not up "on." That's just human nature.

They are much more positive when they are in the "now." When you give people information that surprises them, their natural first reaction is often negative. If you deliver surprising news to a group of people and the most vocal and most

Influential react negatively, then the entire group is likely to be negative. That can take a meeting off course or bring it to a grinding halt. That's why you want to get those vocal and influential people to buy in ahead of time.

The meeting before the meeting helps followers to gain perspective. What people see is determined by where they sit. They naturally see things from their own perspective, not from anyone else's, including yours. As the leader, you need to help followers see things as you do. That requires time and intentionality.

The meeting before the meeting helps to increase your influence. Leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less. How do you gain influence with people? You invest in them. How do you invest in them? It starts with giving them time. You won't build any kind of positive relationship with people doing that. They won't feel valued. It does nothing for them, nor does it do anything for your influence.

The meeting before the meeting helps you develop trust. Creating change requires trust from your people. When you have the meeting before the meeting, it gives you a chance to develop that trust.

The meeting before the meeting helps you avoid being blindsided. Good leaders are usually pretty good at knowing what's going on. They have strong leadership intuition. They are connected to their people. They usually have a good handling on the intangibles, such as morale, momentum, culture, etc.



## Be A Connector, Not Just A Climber

Most leaders naturally fall into either the climber or connector camp. They are either highly positional or highly relational. Which type of leader are you? Take a look at some of the differences between climbers and connectors.

Climbers think vertical – Connectors think horizontal. Climbers are always acutely aware of who is ahead of them and who is behind them in the standings or on the organizational chart.

Climbers focus on position – Connectors focus on relationships. Because climbers are always thinking about moving up, they are often focused on their position. However, connectors are more focused on relationships. Unlike positional people who desire to climb the ladder, relational people are more focused on building bridges.

Climbers value competition – Connectors value cooperation. Climbers see nearly everything as a competition. For some, that can mean trying to win at all costs. Connectors, however, are more interested in using their relationships with others to foster cooperation. They see working together as a win.

Climbers seek power – Connectors seek partnerships. The way to create really high-powered teams is to form partnerships, which is what connectors are more likely to do.

Climbers build their image – Connectors build consensus. Connectors are more concerned with getting everyone on the same page so that they can work together.

Climbers want to stand apart – Connectors want to stand together. Climbers want to distinguish themselves from everybody else in the organization. Connectors, on the other hand, find ways to get closer to other people, to find common ground that they can stand on together.

## Influences Should be Loaned But Never Given

Maxwell believes that the pursuit of influence isn't meant to be selfish or negative. Influence has a purpose greater than that of bettering the life of the influencer. Boiled down to its essence, influence has value for three purposes:

- 1. Influence exists to speak up for those who don't have influence.**

One of the greatest responsibilities of leaders is to speak up for those who don't have influence. Any leader who does not lift up the lives of other people is not fulfilling the highest calling of being a leader.

- 2. Influence exists to speak to those who do have influence.**

Another value of leadership is the ability to influence the influential. It is often difficult for anyone but a leader to get the ear of another leader.



### 3. **Influence exists to be passed on to others.**

It takes a leader to raise up another leader. People of influence often have the opportunity of singling out potential leaders and helping them build a solid foundation upon which to develop their leadership.

## Conclusion

If you are a seasoned, successful leader and many of the things in this book are merely a reminder of what you already know, then put your focus where it should be: on raising up other leaders.

Never forget that your greatest potential value isn't in your leadership; it's in your ability to take people with leadership potential and help them become successful leaders. You can make a greater impact by developing a small cadre of leaders than by leading a huge army of followers.

And no matter where you are in the leadership journey, keep growing, keep leading, and keep working to make a difference.

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