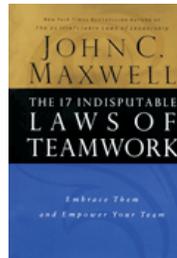


# The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork

Embrace Them And Empower Your Team



**Author:** John Maxwell  
**Publisher:** Thomas Nelson, Inc.,  
**Date of Publication:** 2001  
**ISBN:** 0785274346  
**No. of Pages:** 265 pages

## ■ About the Author



John Maxwell

In 1985, **John Maxwell** founded The INJOY Group, a collection of three distinct companies that employ 200 people and provide resources and services that help people reach their personal and leadership potential. In addition to building a successful organization, John has authored more than thirty books, including the New York Times best sellers **The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership** and **Failing Forward**.

Called the nation's foremost expert on leadership, John was born in central Ohio five and a half decades ago. He credits his excellent leadership instincts and his early leadership training to his father, Melvin Maxwell, whom he followed into the ministry. For over twenty-five years, John led churches in Indiana, Ohio, and California.

In 1995, John began dedicating himself full-time to writing, speaking, and consulting. Each year he speaks live to more than 350,000 people. Known as a dynamic communicator, he is in high demand on the topic of leadership, and he speaks to many American corporations and entrepreneurial organizations.

John has earned bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees and has also received five honorary doctorates. He lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

Two of John's favorite books are **How to Win Friends & Influence People** by Dale Carnegie, and **As a Man Thinketh** by James Allen.

## ■ The Big Idea

Building a winning team is a process. Here are guiding laws for any type of organization, group, or family, based on the principle that teamwork is essential in any great human endeavor. Whether you're a leader or a member, these laws will definitely have a positive effect on you, your team, and your life!

## ■ CHAPTER 1: The Law of Significance

*One is too small a number to achieve greatness.*

Throughout human history, whatever the endeavor, great individuals still had teams of people supporting them along the way.

### Key Thoughts

- Teamwork is the heart of great achievement.
- Teams involve more people, thus affording more resources, ideas, and energy.
- Teams benefit from multiple perspectives.

People still want to do things by themselves because of:

**1. Ego.** "Spinning more plates doesn't increase your talent, it increases your likelihood of dropping a plate." To achieve something really big, let go of your ego, and get ready to be part of a team.

**2. Insecurity.** Secure leaders give power to others. Insecure leaders fail to build teams because:

- They want to maintain total control
- They fear being replaced by someone more capable

**3. Naiveté.** Some people simply underestimate the difficulty of achieving big things. As a result, they try to go it alone. In some cases, like on a mountain trek, this decision can be fatal.

**4. Temperament.** Some people aren't very outgoing and don't think in terms of team building. It never occurs to them to enlist others to achieve something.

## ■ CHAPTER 2: The Law of the Big Picture

*The goal is more important than the role.*

If you think you are the entire picture, you will never see the big picture.

As in sports, individual accomplishments help the ego, but only good teams win championships.

How do people start to become a more unified team?

1. Look at the big picture. You need to have a clear vision or goal. Leaders must communicate this vision to the team members. People on a team will work together only if they see what they're working toward.
2. Size up the situation.
3. Line up the needed resources. (Equipment, facilities, funding, etc.)
4. Call up the right players.
5. Give up personal agendas.
6. Step up to a higher level. This means subordinating your role for the team's success. Former US president Jimmy Carter did this when he joined Habitat for Humanity, working alongside other volunteers. When you see the big picture clearly, you serve the team more quickly.

## ■ CHAPTER 3: The Law of the Niche

*All players have a place where they add the most value.*

One good example of The Law of the Niche is US Secretary of State Colin Powell. As the United States' first African-American Secretary of State, he had an impeccable track record of service to his country as an army soldier, officer, a four-star general, a deputy national security adviser, then as the national security adviser, and the youngest chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff. When the time came to select a person for the job of Secretary of State, there was no question as to who should fill the position. President Bush chose well in asking Colin Powell, giving his team greater credibility with a constituency that was less inclined to trust them. This example shows us that when the right team member is in the right place, everyone benefits.

What happens when one or more members are in the wrong position?

1. Morale erodes.
2. Progress comes to a halt.
3. The competition takes advantage.
4. The team fails to realize its potential.

Having the right people in the right places is essential to team building. A team's dynamic changes according to the placement of people:

The Wrong Person in the Wrong Place	=	Regression
The Wrong Person in the Right Place	=	Frustration
The Right Person in the Wrong Place	=	Confusion
The Right Person in the Right Place	=	Progression
The Right People in the Right Places	=	Multiplication

To be able to put people in the places that utilize their talents and maximize the team's potential, you need three things:

1. **You must know the team.** In terms of vision, purpose, culture, and history.
2. **You must know the situation.** Whether the team is at a stage where it needs fine-tuning or building from the ground up.
3. **You must know the players.** Evaluate each person's skills, discipline, strengths, emotions, and potential.

Guidelines for finding your niche:

- Be secure. In order to grow, you must be flexible and open to change.
- Get to know yourself. Spend time reflecting on and exploring your gifts. Ask others for feedback. Remove your personal blind spots by identifying those weaknesses.
- Trust your leader. A good leader moves you in the right direction. If you can't trust your leader, you are on the wrong team.
- See the big picture. Your place on the team only makes sense in the context of the big picture.
- Rely on your experience. Learn from past failures and successes. When you discover what you are made for, your heart sings.

One fine example of this law is the US military. This organization relies on matching the right people to the right places, if there is a breakdown in that structure, the result can be disastrous.

A place for everyone and everyone in his place.

How to Get On Track:

- If you see you are not in the right place, make a transition to your niche. Create a transition plan and timetable.
- If you have no idea what you should be doing, then do some research. Try to articulate your life's purpose. Try new things, and gain experience.

- For leaders, after you know who belongs where, motivate people by stretching them out of their comfort zones. This is how they will reach fulfillment and understand what they are truly capable of achieving.

## ■ CHAPTER 4: The Law of the Mount Everest

*As the challenge escalates, the need of teamwork elevates.*

Listen to the wise words of Sherpa Tenzing Norgay, who reached the summit of Mount Everest with Edmund Hillary in 1953:

"You do not climb a mountain like Everest by trying to race ahead on your own, or by competing with your comrades. You do it slowly and carefully, by unselfish teamwork."

How do you accomplish your own Everest? Ask yourself:

1. What is my dream?
2. Who is on my team?
3. What should my dream team look like?

Your team must be the size of your dream.

But remember to focus on the team, and not the dream. When you focus on the team, the dream takes care of itself.

Type of Challenge	Type of Team Required
New Challenge	Creative Team
Controversial Challenge	United Team
Changing Challenge	Fast and Flexible Team
Unpleasant Challenge	Motivated Team
Diversified Challenge	Complementary Team
Long-Term Challenge	Determined Team
Everest-Sized Challenge	Experienced Team

When the team you have doesn't match up to the team of your dreams, then you have only two choices: Give up your dream, or grow up your team.

How to Grow a Team:

1. Develop Team Members. Determine what they need based on the following:
  - Enthusiastic beginner needs direction
  - Disillusioned learner needs coaching
  - Cautious completer needs support
  - Self-reliant achiever needs responsibility
2. Add Key Team Members
3. Change the Leadership. The challenge of the moment often determines the leader for

- that challenge.
4. Remove Ineffective Members

Sometimes challenges are thrust upon a team, and there is no choice but to do the best you can. Such was what happened to the Apollo 13 mission. The survival of the astronauts depended on the highest level of teamwork in NASA's history. The challenge involved getting the command and lunar modules on the quickest course home, while conserving the most important consumables on board like power, oxygen and water. Three men's lives were on the line. In this situation, failure was not an option.

Each time NASA's massive team faced an obstacle that threatened to leave the crew stranded in space, their pooled ingenuity, inherent tenacity, and incredible cooperation enabled them to overcome it.

## ■ CHAPTER 5: The Law of the Chain

*The strength of the team is impacted by its weakest link.*

In 1989, the oil tanker Exxon Valdez, ran aground Bligh Reef on Prince William Sound. The oil slick cost billions of dollars in damages and cleanup operations, not to mention the lives of thousands of seabirds, sea otters, harbor seals, eagles, and whales. The cause: a weak link in the ship's chain of command. A drunken, negligent Captain ignored company policy, caused discrepancies in navigation, and left his overworked, fatigued Third Mate on the bridge. The result was one of the greatest environmental disasters in the history of Alaska. The Exxon company faced a public relations nightmare and enormous financial obligations.

Your Team is Not For Everyone

1. Not everyone will take the journey
2. Not everyone should take the journey
3. Not everyone can take the journey

How do you recognize people who fall into this category?

- They can't keep up with other team members.
- They don't grow in their area of responsibility.
- They don't see the big picture.
- They won't work on personal weaknesses.
- They won't work with the rest of the team.
- They can't fulfill expectations for their area.

Several things may happen when a weak link remains on the team:

1. The stronger members identify the weak one.
2. The stronger members have to help the weak one.
3. The stronger members come to resent the weak one.
4. The stronger members become less effective.
5. The stronger members question the leader's ability.

## ■ CHAPTER 6: The Law of the Catalyst

Winning teams have players who make things happen.

Catalysts are get-it-done-and-then-some people. Take Michael Jordan. Aside from an amateur and professional record of amazing statistics, awards and achievements, people in the NBA respect him for his integrity and reliability.

Basically there are 3 kinds of players on a team:

1. People who don't want the ball. They can't take high-pressure situations.
2. People who want the ball but shouldn't.
3. People who want the ball and should.

Characteristics of a Catalyst:

1. Intuitive
2. Communicative
3. Passionate
4. Talented
5. Creative
6. Initiating
7. Responsible
8. Generous
9. Influential

How To Become A Better Team Member:

1. Find a mentor. Find someone who makes things happen to help you along the way.
2. Begin a growth plan. Put yourself on a program to develop your skills and talents.
3. Get out of your comfort zone. You won't know what you're capable of until you try to go beyond what you've done before.

## ■ CHAPTER 7: The Law of the Compass

Vision gives team members direction and confidence.

Great vision precedes great achievement. Every team needs a compelling vision to give it direction. A team without vision is at worst, purposeless. At best, it is subject to the personal (and sometimes selfish) agendas of its various teammates. As the agendas work against each other, the team's energy and drive drain away. On the other hand, a team that embraces a vision becomes focused, energized, and confident. It knows where it's headed and why it's going there.

The Leader's responsibility is to always state and restate the vision, although the vision itself can come from anyone on the team.

A team should examine the following six "compasses" before embarking on any journey.

1. A Moral Compass. (Look Above) Great businesses are built along the lines of the strictest integrity.
2. An Intuitive Compass. (Look Within) The true fire of passion and conviction burns only from within. It fires up the committed and fries the uncommitted.
3. A Historical Compass (Look Behind) Make positive use of anything contributed by previous teams in the organization.
4. A Directional Compass (Look Ahead) Vision provides direction, goals bring concrete targets to serve the vision.
5. A Strategic Compass (Look Around) Strategy brings process to the vision.
6. A Visionary Compass (Look Beyond) You must have a long-range vision to keep from being frustrated by short-range failures.

When you can see it, you can seize it.

People need to be shown the team's compass clearly, creatively, and continually. Use the following checklist to make sure that the vision you show the team possesses:

- Clarity (for understanding)
- Connectedness (to past, present, and future)
- Purpose (direction)
- Goals (targets)
- Honesty (integrity and credibility)
- Stories (relationships)
- Challenge (stretching the vision)
- Passion (fuels the vision)
- Modeling (brings accountability to the vision)
- Strategy (brings process to the vision)

## ■ CHAPTER 8: The Law of the Bad Apple

Rotten attitudes ruin a team.

Rivalry within a team simply ruins the whole game of the team. Talent is not enough to win, it takes a bunch of players with both talent and good attitudes to achieve something great. Good attitudes guarantee a team's success, but bad attitudes guarantee its failure. There are 5 truths about Attitudes and how they affect teamwork:

1. Attitudes have the power to lift up or tear down a team.
2. An attitude compounds when exposed to others. People's attitudes are infectious.
3. Bad attitudes compound faster than good ones.
4. Attitudes are subjective, so identifying a wrong one can be difficult. Some common rotten attitudes that ruin a team:

- An inability to admit wrongdoing
- Petty jealousy

- The 'disease of me', or an overpowering belief in your own importance
  - A critical spirit, or finding fault with everything
  - A desire to hog all the credit
5. Rotten Attitudes, left alone, ruin everything. Bad attitudes must be addressed.

The first place to start is with yourself. Do you think the team wouldn't be able to get along without you? Do you secretly believe that recent team successes are attributable to your personal efforts, not the work of the whole team? Do you keep score when it comes to the praise and perks handed out to other team members? Do you have a hard time admitting you made a mistake? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you need to keep your attitude in check.

## ■ CHAPTER 9: The Law of Countability

*Teammates must be able to count on each other when it counts.*

Stanley C. Gault said, "We don't work for each other, we work with each other." This is the essence of countability, the desire for teammates to work together toward common goals. Team members who can depend on each other only during easy times have not developed countability.

The formula for Countability is Character + Competence + Commitment + Consistency + Cohesion = Countability

The greatest compliment you can receive is being counted on.

Ask yourself if your integrity is unquestionable, if you perform your work with excellence, if you are dedicated to the team's success, if you can be depended on every time, and if your actions bring the team together. For team leaders, here are some suggestions from William Cohen:

1. Develop pride in group membership.
2. Convince your group that they are the best.
3. Give recognition whenever possible.
4. Encourage organizational mottos, names, symbols, and slogans.
5. Establish your group's worth by examining and promoting its history and values.
6. Focus on the common purpose.
7. Encourage people to participate in activities together outside of work.

## ■ CHAPTER 10: The Law of the Price Tag

*The team fails to reach its potential when it fails to pay the price.*

In 2000, Montgomery Ward and Company, one of the US's oldest retailers, closed its

doors and filed for bankruptcy. It had lost the battle with Sears, by failing to pay the price. What was originally started by a man who was willing to pay the price with his invention of the "Satisfaction Guaranteed or your money back" clause, became a company that was too cautious to make any advances. Sears, on the other hand, had ventured into retail stores in big cities, shifting focus from rural to urban centers. Sears became the most successful department store chain in the country. The owners of Montgomery Ward were unwilling to get out of their comfort zone, take a risk, and try to break new ground.

Here are the 4 truths about The Law of the Price Tag:

1. The price must be paid by everyone.
2. The price must be paid all the time.
3. The price increases if the team wants to improve, change, or keep winning.
4. The price never decreases.

When it comes to the law of the price tag, there are only two kinds of teams who violate it: Those who don't realize the price of success, and those who know the price, but are not willing to pay it.

Sacrifice, time commitment, personal development, unselfishness, these are some of the prices we pay for team success.

## ■ CHAPTER 11: The Law of the Scoreboard

The team can make adjustments when it knows where it stands.

For any kind of team, the scoreboard is essential.

1. The scoreboard is essential to understanding. It provides a snapshot of the game at any given time.
2. The scoreboard is essential to evaluating.
3. The scoreboard is essential to decision making.
4. The scoreboard is essential to adjusting.
5. The scoreboard is essential to winning.

eBay is a clear case for the Law of the Scoreboard. It constantly makes adjustments to the desires and interests of its customers and potential customers. They sensed people wanted trust, safety, and privacy on the Internet, so they provided this. They created a unique rating system for subscribers to exchange information on individuals selling merchandise on the site. It always has an eye on the scoreboard, and has its finger on the pulse of consumer trends.

When you know what to do, then you can do what you know.

## ■ CHAPTER 12: The Law of the Bench

Great teams have great depth.

Any team that wants to excel must have good substitutes as well as starters. This holds true in any field, not just sports. You've got to build your bench..

- Starters are frontline people who directly add value to the organization and directly influence its course.
- The bench is made up of the people who indirectly add value to the organization and who support the starters.

The Bench is indispensable.

1. Today's bench players may be tomorrow's stars
2. The success of a supporting player can multiply the success of a starter
3. There are more bench players than starters
4. A bench player placed correctly will at times be more valuable than a starter
5. A strong bench player gives the leader more options
6. The bench is usually called upon at critical times for the team

Building Tomorrow's Team:

1. Recruitment. Who is joining the team?
2. Training. Are you developing the team?
3. Losses. Who is leaving the team?

How do you build your bench?

1. Personality. Is he driving, influencing, supporting, or calculating?
2. Passion. Is she motivated by results, relationships, money, recognition, or security?
3. Pattern. Does he work best alone or with a team?
4. Potential. Are they maintainers or builders?
5. Profile. Will he fit the culture?
6. Placement. Where does she fit in and add value?

## ■ CHAPTER 13: The Law of Identity

Shared values define the team.

Just as personal values influence and guide an individual's behavior, organizational values influence and guide the team's behavior.

Shared values are like:

- **Glue.** Just like in a marriage, if team members are not willing to fight for the team, then the chances of working as a unit and staying together to reach their potential are very small.
- **A Foundation.** You need common ground to build on. Values make the strongest foundation.
- **A Ruler.** Values set the standard for team performance. They must be a measure of expectations to be fulfilled.
- **A Compass.** When a team embraces a set of values, they possess a

- moral compass to make decisions by.
- **A Magnet.** What kind of people are drawn to Habitat for Humanity? People who want to see substandard housing eliminated. The type of values you choose for the team will attract the type of members you need. People attract other like-minded people.
- **An Identity.** Values define the team and give it a unique identity to its members, potential recruits, clients, and the public.

What you believe identifies who you are.

Go through the following process with your team:

- Articulate the values. Put them down on paper.
- Compare values with practices.
- Teach the values.
- Practice the values.
- Institutionalize the values.
- Publicly praise the values. (Reward those who epitomize the values)

## ■ CHAPTER 14: The Law of Communication

*Interaction fuels action.*

Creating positive change in an organization requires communication. Effective teams have teammates who are constantly talking, and listening to each other.

The comic strip Dilbert hilariously shows how communication breaks down within organizations. A boss may send an employee to work on a project that has been canceled. Marketing people think up harebrained products and promote them, then ask the engineers to produce them on an impossible timetable. Sadly, too many people in the corporate world can identify with Dilbert.

Every team has to develop good communication in four areas:

1. From leader to teammates. Be consistent. Be clear. Be courteous.
2. From teammates to leader. People should be able to disagree openly but With respect.
3. Among teammates. Be supportive. Stay current. Be vulnerable.
4. Between the team and the public. Be receptive, responsive, and realistic.

## ■ CHAPTER 15: The Law of the Edge

*The difference between two equally talented teams is leadership.*

Personnel determine the potential of the team.

Vision determines the direction of the team.

Work ethic determines the preparation of the team.

Leadership determines the success of the team.

From GE's Jack Welch, to the victory of the US in the Persian Gulf War under Generals Norman Schwarzkopf and Colin Powell, and the phenomenal Chicago Bulls' six NBA championships under Phil Jackson and Michael Jordan. Look at any team that has achieved great success, and you will find it had strong leadership.

Leaders push the thinking of their teammates beyond old boundaries. Leaders transfer ownership for work to those who execute the work.

Leaders create an environment where each team member wants to be responsible.

Leaders coach the development of personal capabilities.

Leaders learn quickly and encourage others to learn rapidly.

Good leaders...

- Do not limit an organization as others do.
- Have greater influence than others do.
- Value the process of developing people more than others do.
- Prepare the team for the journey better than others do.
- Communicate more effectively than others do.
- Create momentum and lift the team to a higher level than others do.
- Stand on a foundation of trust that is more solid than others'.
- Command greater respect than others do.
- Work on leadership issues earlier than others do.
- Draw more leaders to themselves than others do.
- Connect with people better than others do.
- Bring stronger key people around them than others do.
- Reproduce more leaders than others do.
- Empower team members more than others do.
- Win the teams more than others do.
- Sell themselves and their vision to a greater degree than others do.
- Establish priorities more effectively than others do.
- Understand and use timing more effectively than others do.
- Give up their personal agendas more than others do.
- Grow leaders and organizations faster than others do.
- Leave a legacy that lasts longer than others do.

#### **The Myth of the Head Table**

On a team, one person is always in charge in every situation. Understand that in particular situations, maybe another person would be best suited for leading the team.

#### **The Myth of the Round Table**

This is the belief that everyone is equal, which is absolutely not true. The person with greater skill, experience, and productivity in a given area is more important to the team in that area.

Take personal responsibility for your leadership development and growth. Find a mentor. Once you add value to yourself, you can add value to the team.

## ■ CHAPTER 16: The Law of High Morale

*When you're winning, nothing hurts.*

People may remember the unselfish sacrifice of gymnast Kerri Strug of the US women's team at the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta. She struggled with an injury, but miraculously delivered the needed vault score, exactly what her team required to claim the Olympic gold. Despite the torn ligaments in her left ankle, she felt great knowing she had served her team well.

When a team has high morale, it can deal with whatever circumstances are thrown at it, and creates its own circumstances.

1. High morale is the great exaggerator.
2. High morale is the great elevator.
3. High morale is the great energizer.
4. High morale is the great eliminator.
5. High morale is the great emancipator

The 4 Stages of Morale:

1. Poor morale - the leader must do everything
2. Low morale - the leader must do productive things
3. Moderate morale - the leader must do difficult things
4. High morale - the leader must do little things

## ■ CHAPTER 17: The Law of Dividends

*Investing in the team compounds over time.*

The time, money, and effort required to develop team members won't change the team overnight, but developing them always pays off.

How to invest in your team:

1. Make the decision to build a team, start investing in the team. Deciding that people on the team are worth developing is the first step.
2. Gather the best team possible, this elevates the potential of the team.
3. Pay the price to develop the team, this ensures growth.
4. Do things together as a team. This provides community.
5. Empower team members with responsibility and authority. This raises leaders for the team.
6. Give credit for success to the team. This lifts morale.
7. Watch to see that the investment in the team is paying off. This brings accountability to the team.
8. Stop your investment in players who do not grow. This cuts greater losses for the team.
9. Create new opportunities for the team. This allows the team to stretch.
10. Give the team the best possible chance to succeed. This guarantees the team a high return.

## ■ Afterword

And what about that thing called chemistry? Chemistry is the result when you successfully implement all the Laws of Teamwork! Happy team-building!