

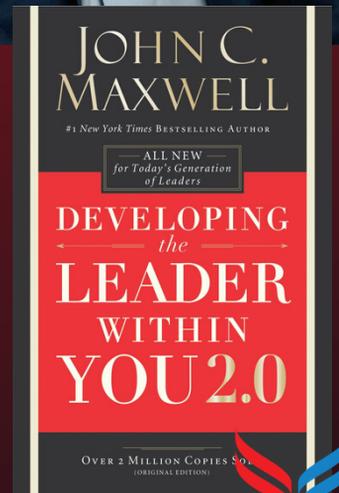
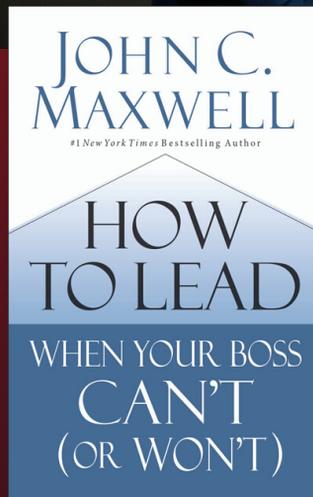
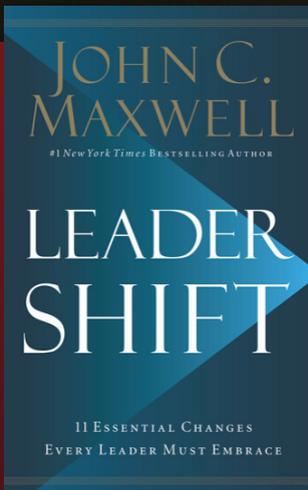
LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

from

John C. Maxwell's



**LATEST
BESTSELLING
BOOKS**



DEVELOPING
— *the* —
LEADER
WITHIN
YOU 2.0

JOHN C.
MAXWELL



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LEADERSHIP

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THE DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP:
INFLUENCE

Everyone talks about it; few understand it. Most people desire to cultivate a high capacity for it; few actually do. I can put my hands on more than fifty definitions and descriptions of it from my personal files. If you google it, you'll get more than 760 million results for it. What am I talking about? *Leadership*.

When I wrote the first edition of this book in 1992, people who wanted to succeed in businesses and other organizations focused their attention on management. Every year another management fad seemed to be in fashion. But few people paid any attention to leadership. It wasn't on most people's radar.

I have earned three degrees: a bachelor's, a master's, and a doctorate. Yet I had not taken a single course in leadership during my studies before the 1993 publication of *Developing the Leader Within You*. Why? Because none of the universities I attended offered a single course on the subject.

Today, however, *leadership* is a buzzword. And schools and universities have embraced it. If you wanted to, you could earn an advanced degree in the subject at more than a hundred accredited universities. All three of the universities I attended now offer courses in leadership.

Why has leadership become so important? Because people are recognizing that becoming a better leader changes lives. Everything rises and falls

on leadership. The world becomes a better place when people become better leaders. Developing yourself to become the leader you have the potential to be will change *everything* for you. It will add to your effectiveness, subtract from your weaknesses, divide your workload, and multiply your impact.

WHY MANY PEOPLE DON'T DEVELOP AS LEADERS

More and more people recognize the value of good leadership, yet not very many work to become better leaders. Why is that? Despite the widespread prevalence of leadership books and classes, many people think leadership isn't for them. Maybe it's because they make one of these assumptions:

I'M NOT A "BORN LEADER," SO I CAN'T LEAD

Leaders are not born. Well, okay, they're *born*. I've never met an unborn leader. (And I wouldn't want to.) What I really mean is that your ability to lead is not set at birth. While it's true that some people are born with more natural gifts that will help them lead at a higher level, everyone has the potential to become a leader. And leadership can be developed and improved by anyone willing to put in the effort.

A TITLE AND SENIORITY WILL AUTOMATICALLY MAKE ME A LEADER

I believe this kind of thinking was more common in my generation and that of my parents, but it can still be seen today. People think they need to be appointed to a position of leadership, when the reality is that becoming a good leader requires desire and some basic tools. You can have a title and seniority and be incapable of leading. And you can have no title or seniority and be a good leader.

WORK EXPERIENCE WILL AUTOMATICALLY MAKE ME A LEADER

Leadership is like maturity. It doesn't automatically come with age. Sometimes age comes alone. Tenure does not create leadership ability. In fact, it's more likely to engender entitlement than leadership ability.

I'M WAITING UNTIL I GET A POSITION TO START DEVELOPING AS A LEADER

This last assumption has been the most frustrating to me as a teacher of leadership. When I first started hosting leadership conferences, people would say, “If I ever become a leader”—meaning if they were ever appointed to a leadership position—“then maybe I’ll come to one of your seminars.” What’s the problem? As legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden said, “When opportunity comes, it’s too late to prepare.” If you start learning about leadership now, not only will you increase your opportunities, but you’ll also make the most of them when they arrive.

HOW WILL YOU DEVELOP THE LEADER WITHIN YOU?

The bottom line is that if you’ve never done anything to develop yourself as a leader, you can start today. And if you have already begun your leadership journey, you can become a better leader than you already are by intentionally developing the leader within you.

What will that take? That’s the subject of this book. These ten chapters contain what I consider to be the ten *essentials* for developing yourself as a leader. I’ve also created free bonus materials that you can access at MaxwellLeader.com. Included is an assessment that will help you gauge your current leadership ability. I encourage you to take it before reading any further.

Let’s start with the most important concept of the ten: *influence*. After more than five decades of observing leaders around the world and many years of developing my own leadership potential, I have come to this conclusion: *Leadership is influence*. That’s it—nothing more, nothing less. That’s why my favorite leadership proverb is “He who thinketh he leadeth and hath no one following him is only taking a walk.” For you to be a leader, someone has to be following you. I love what James C. Georges, founder and chairman of the PAR Group, said in an interview I read years ago: “What is leadership? Remove for a moment the moral issues behind it, and there is only one definition: *Leadership is the ability to obtain followers.*”¹

Leadership is the ability
to obtain followers.

—JAMES C. GEORGES

Anyone—for good or ill—who gets others to follow is a leader. That means Hitler was a leader. (Did you know that *Time* named Hitler their Man of the Year in 1938 because he had greater influence on the world than anyone else?) Osama bin Laden was a leader. Jesus of Nazareth was a leader. So was Joan of Arc. Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King Jr., and John F. Kennedy were leaders. While the value systems, abilities, and goals of all these people were vastly different, each of them attracted followers. They all had influence.

Influence is the beginning of true leadership. If you mistakenly define leadership as the ability to achieve a position instead of the ability to attract followers, then you will go after position, rank, or title to try to become a leader. But this type of thinking results in two common problems. First, what do you do if you attain the status of a leadership position but experience the frustration of having no one follow you? Second, what if you never achieve the “proper” title? Will you keep waiting to try to make a positive impact on the world?

My goal with this book is to help you understand how influence works, and use it as the starting point for learning how to lead more effectively. Each chapter is designed to help you acquire skills and abilities that further develop you as a leader. With the addition of each skill set, you will become a better leader.

INSIGHTS ABOUT INFLUENCE

Before we get into the particulars of how influence with others works and how to develop it, let’s nail down a few important insights about influence:

I. EVERYONE INFLUENCES SOMEONE

My friend Tim Elmore, the founder of Growing Leaders, once told me that sociologists estimate that even the most introverted individual will influence ten thousand other people during his or her lifetime. Isn’t that amazing? Every day you influence others. And you are influenced

by others. That means no one is excluded from being both a leader and a follower.

In any given situation with any group of people, the dynamic of influence is always in play. Let me illustrate. Let's say a child is getting ready for school. During that process, his mother is usually the dominant influence. She may choose what he will eat and what he will wear. When he arrives at school, he may become the influencer in his group of friends. When class begins, his teacher becomes the dominant influencer. After school, when the boy goes out and plays, the neighborhood bully may have the most influence. And at dinnertime, Mom or Dad has the most influence at the table as they eat.

If you are observant, you can discover the prominent leader of any group. Titles and positions don't matter. Just watch the people as they gather. As they work to resolve an issue or make a decision, whose opinion seems most valuable? Who is the person others watch the most when the issue is being discussed? Who is the one with whom people quickly agree? Whom do others defer to and follow? Answers to these questions point you to who the real leader is in a particular group.

You have influence in this world, but *realizing your potential* as a leader is your responsibility. If you put effort into developing yourself as a leader, you have the potential to influence more people and to do so in more significant ways.

2. WE DON'T ALWAYS KNOW WHO OR HOW MUCH WE INFLUENCE

One of the most effective ways to understand the power of influence is to think about the times you have been touched in your life by a person or an event. Significant events leave marks on all our lives and memories. For example, ask people born before 1930 what they were doing on December 7, 1941, when they heard that Pearl Harbor was bombed, and they will describe in detail their feelings and surroundings when they heard the terrible news. Ask someone born before 1955 to describe what he or she was doing on November 22, 1963, when the news that John F. Kennedy had been shot was broadcast. Again, you will hear no loss for

words. Each generation remembers events that mark them: the day the space shuttle *Challenger* blew up. The tragedy of 9/11. The list goes on. What major event stands out to you? How is that event continuing to influence your thinking and actions?

Now think about the people who influenced you in a powerful way, or the little things that meant a lot to you. I can point to the influence of a camp I attended as a youth and how it helped determine my career choice. My seventh-grade teacher, Glen Leatherwood, began to stir a sense of calling in my life that I continue to live out today in my seventies. When my mother bought bubble lights for our family Christmas tree, there was no way for her to know that they would evoke the feeling of Christmas in me every year. The affirming note I received from a professor in college kept me going at a time when I was doubting myself. My list is endless. So is yours.

We are influenced every day by so many people. Sometimes small things make big impressions. We have been molded into the people we are by those influences. And we mold others, often when we least expect it. Author and educator J. R. Miller said it well: “There have been meetings of only a moment which have left impressions for life, for eternity. No one of us can understand that mysterious thing we call influence . . . yet out of every one of us continually virtue goes, either to heal, to bless, to leave marks of beauty; or to wound, to hurt, to poison, to stain other lives.”²

3. THE BEST INVESTMENT IN TOMORROW IS TO DEVELOP YOUR INFLUENCE TODAY

What’s your greatest investment possibility for the future? The stock market? Real estate holdings? More education? All of these things have value. But I would argue that one of the best investments you can make in yourself is to develop your influence. Why? Because if you have the desire to accomplish something, you will be in a better place to do it if others are willing to help.

In the book *Leaders*, Warren G. Bennis and Burt Nanus say, “The truth is that leadership opportunities are plentiful and within reach of most people.”³ That’s true in businesses, volunteer organizations, and social

groups. If you're an entrepreneur, those opportunities are multiplied exponentially. The question is, will you be ready for them when they come? To make the most of them, you must prepare for leadership today and learn how to cultivate influence and use it positively to make a difference.

Robert Dilenschneider, founder and principal of the Dilenschneider Group and former CEO of the PR firm Hill and Knowlton Strategies, has been one of the nation's major influence brokers for many years. In his book *Power and Influence*, he shares the idea of the "power triangle" to help leaders become more effective. The three components of this triangle are *communication*, *recognition*, and *influence*. Dilenschneider says, "If you are communicating effectively, you will get positive recognition for your communication from the audiences you are trying to influence, which means people will think what you are doing is right and that you are doing it in the right way. When you get positive recognition, your influence grows. You are perceived as competent, effective, worthy of respect—*powerful*. Power comes from remembering and using the linkage of communication, recognition, and influence."⁴

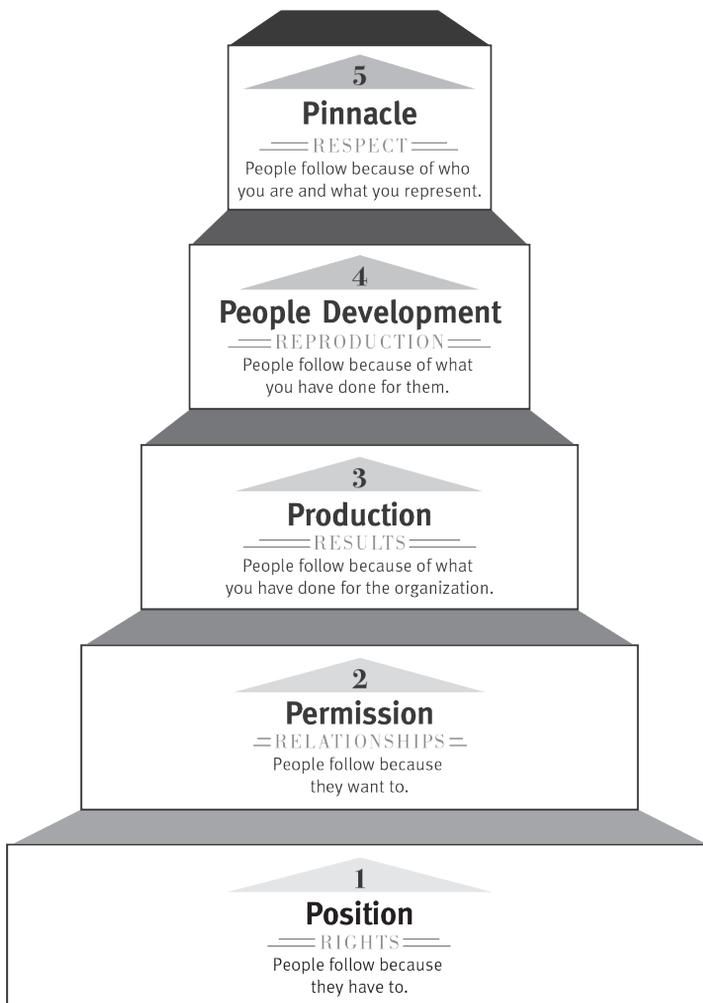
As a young leader, I followed that pathway to better leadership because communication is one of my gifts. As I became a better communicator, I did receive recognition. Soon I was being asked to teach on the subject of leadership. But I also sensed that leadership was more complex than just communication, recognition, and influence. I began thinking about how I could develop a model that would help others understand how influence works, and more importantly, how to develop influence in their own lives. I knew that if the people I helped invested in their influence, they would be able to make a positive impact in their world, wherever that happened to be.

THE FIVE LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP

I began studying influence more carefully, and I also drew upon my own leadership experience and what I observed in leaders I respected and admired. What I discovered is that influence can be developed in five stages. I turned those stages into a tool that I call the 5 Levels of

Leadership. It provides a model of influence that can help you better understand the dynamics of leadership, and it also creates a road map you can follow to develop influence with others. I've been teaching this model of leadership for more than thirty years, and I can't count the number of people it's helped. I hope it helps you in the same way it has them.

==== The 5 Levels of Leadership ====



Let's examine each of the levels. You'll quickly get a handle on how they work.

LEVEL 1: POSITION

The most basic entry level of leadership is the Position level. Why is this the lowest level? Because Position represents leadership *before* a leader has developed any real influence with the people being led. In generations past, people would follow leaders simply because they possessed a title or position of authority. But that is not very common today in American culture. People will follow a positional leader only as far as they *have* to.

When I took my first job as a leader in 1969, people were respectful of me. They were kind. But I had no real influence. I was twenty-two. They could see how little I knew, even if I couldn't. I found out how little influence I had when I led my first board meeting. I started the meeting with my agenda in hand. But then Claude started to talk. He was just an old farmer, but everyone in the room looked to him for leadership. Whatever he said held the most weight. Claude wasn't pushy or disrespectful. He didn't do a power play. He didn't have to. He already had all the power. He just wanted to get things done.

It's very clear to me now that in that first job, I was a leader living on Level 1. All I had going for me at first was my position—along with a good work ethic and a desire to make a difference. I learned more on Level 1 than at any other time in my early years of leading. I figured out pretty quickly that a title and position won't get a person very far in leadership.

People who have been appointed to a position may have authority, but that authority doesn't exceed their job description. Positional leaders have certain *rights*. They have the right to enforce the rules. They have the right to tell people to do their jobs. They have the right to use whatever power they have been granted.

But real leadership is more than having granted authority. Real leadership is being a person others will gladly and confidently follow. Real leaders know the difference between position and influence. It's the difference between being a boss and being a leader:

Bosses drive workers; leaders coach them.
Bosses depend on authority; leaders depend on goodwill.
Bosses inspire fear; leaders inspire enthusiasm.
Bosses say, “I”; leaders say, “We.”
Bosses fix the blame for any breakdown; leaders fix the breakdown.
Bosses know how it is done; leaders show how.
Bosses say, “Go”; leaders say, “Let’s go!”

Position is a good place to start in leadership, but it’s a terrible place to stay. Anyone who never leads beyond Position depends on territorial rights, protocol, tradition, and organizational charts. These things are not inherently negative—unless they become the basis for authority. They are poor substitutes for leadership skills.

Position is a good place to start in leadership, but it’s a terrible place to stay.

If you’ve been in a leadership position for any length of time, how do you know whether you are relying too much on your position to lead? Here are three common characteristics of positional leaders:

Positional Leaders Look for Security Based on Title More Than Talent

There’s a story about a private during World War I who saw a light in his trench on the battlefield and shouted, “Put out that match!” Much to his chagrin, he discovered that the offender was General “Black Jack” Pershing. Fearing severe punishment, the private tried to stammer out an apology, but General Pershing patted him on the back and said, “That’s all right, son. Just be glad I’m not a second lieutenant.”

The higher people’s level of ability and the resulting influence, the more secure and confident they become. A new second lieutenant might be tempted to rely on his rank and use it as a weapon. A general doesn’t need to.

Positional Leaders Rely on the Influence of Their Leader Instead of Their Own

Baseball Hall of Famer Leo Durocher, who managed the Giants from 1948 to 1955, was once coaching at first base in an exhibition game played at the United States Military Academy at West Point. During the game, a noisy cadet kept shouting at Durocher, trying to get under his skin.

“Hey, Durocher,” he hollered. “How did a little squirt like you get into the major leagues?”

Durocher shouted back, “My congressman appointed me!”⁵

Just because people may be appointed to a position of authority doesn’t automatically mean they can develop influence. Because some positional leaders can’t and possess no influence or authority of their own, they rely on the authority of their boss or the person who appointed them. Anytime they fear that their team members won’t follow them, they’re quick to say, “We need to do this because the boss says so.” That kind of borrowed authority can wear thin after a while.

Positional Leaders Can’t Get People to Follow Them Beyond Their Defined Authority

A common reaction of followers to positional leaders is to do only what’s required and nothing more. If you’ve observed leaders asking people to do something extra, stay late, or go out of their way, only to have the people refuse or say, “That’s not my job,” then you might be seeing the results of positional leadership. People who define their leadership by position will find themselves in a place where people will do only what’s required based on the *rights* granted by that position. People do not become committed to vision or causes led by positional leaders.

If any of these three characteristics describe you, then you may be relying too much on your position, which means you need to work harder at cultivating influence. Until you do, the team you lead will have low energy and you will feel as if every task is a major ordeal. To change that, you’ll need to start focusing on the next level of leadership.

LEVEL 2: PERMISSION

My friend and mentor Fred Smith says, “Leadership is getting people to work for you when they are not obligated.”⁶ That is the essence of the second level of leadership, Permission.

Leaders who remain on the Position level and never develop their influence often lead by intimidation. They are like the chickens that Norwegian psychologist Thorleif Schjelderup-Ebbe studied in developing the “pecking order” principle that is commonly used to describe all kinds of groups. Schjelderup-Ebbe found that in any flock, one hen usually dominates all the others. This dominant hen can peck any other without being pecked in return. The second in the order can peck all the others except the top hen. The rest are arranged in a descending hierarchy, finally ending with one hapless hen who can be pecked by all, but who can peck no one else.

In contrast, Permission is characterized by good *relationships*. The motto on this level could be written as “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” True influence begins with the heart, not the head. It flourishes through personal connections, not rules and regulations. The agenda on this level is not pecking order; it’s people connection. Leaders who succeed on this level focus their time and energy on the needs and desires of the individuals on their team. And they connect with them.

The classic illustration of someone who didn’t do this is Henry Ford in the early days of the Ford Motor Company. He wanted his laborers to work like machines, and he attempted to control their interactions outside of work with rules and regulations. And his focus was totally on his product, the Model T, which he believed was the perfect car, and which he never wanted to change. When people started asking for it in colors other than black, he famously responded, “You can have any color you want as long as it’s black.”

People who are unwilling or unable to build solid, lasting relationships soon discover that they are also unable to sustain lasting, effective leadership. Needless to say, you can care about people without leading them, but you cannot lead people well without caring about them. People

won't go along with you if they cannot get along with you. That's just the way it is.

On Level 2, as you connect with people, build relationships with them, and earn their trust, you begin to develop real influence with them. That makes you want to work together more. It makes you more cooperative with one another. It makes the environment more positive. It boosts everyone's energy. And in work settings, people stay longer and work harder.

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If you've been given a leadership position, then you've been given your boss's permission to lead. If you've earned influence on Level 2, then you have acquired your people's permission to lead. That's powerful. However, I do have to caution you. Staying too long on this level without adding Level 3 will cause highly motivated people to become restless. So let's talk about Production.

LEVEL 3: PRODUCTION

Nearly anyone can succeed on the first two levels of leadership. People can receive a *position* and develop *permission* with little or no innate leadership ability. It's a fact that if you care about people and are willing to learn how to work with them, you can start to gain influence. But that influence will only go so far. To really get things going, you need to win the Production level.

On Level 3, people get things done. And they help the members of their team get things done. Together they produce *results*. That's when good things really begin to happen for the organization. Productivity goes up. People reach goals. Profit increases. Morale becomes high. Turnover becomes low. Team loyalty increases.

Organizations with leaders who are effective in leading on the first three levels of leadership become highly successful. They start winning. And when they do, they start to benefit from what I call "the Big Mo"—momentum. They grow. They solve problems more easily. Winning

becomes normal. Leading becomes easier. Following becomes more fun. The work environment becomes high-energy.

Be aware that most people naturally gravitate to either the Permission or the Production level of leadership, based on whether they tend to be *relationship* people or *results* people. If people naturally build relationships, they may enjoy getting together, but they do it with the sole objective of being together and enjoying one another. If you've ever worked in an environment where meetings are pleasant and everyone gets along—but nothing gets accomplished—then you may have worked with someone who gets Level 2 but not Level 3. (And if you've worked where meetings are productive but relationally miserable, you may have worked with someone who gets Level 3 but not Level 2!) However, as a leader, if you can add *results* to *relationships* and develop a team of people who like each other and get things done, you have created a powerful combination.

Organizations all over the world are searching for people who can produce results, because they understand the impact they can make. One of my all-time favorite stories is about a newly hired traveling salesman named Gooch and the reaction he got from his company's leaders when he sent his first sales report to the home office. It stunned the head of the sales department. Gooch wrote, "I seen this outfit which they ain't never bot a dim's worth of nothin from us and I sole them some goods. I'm now goin to Chicawgo."

Before the man could be given the heave-ho by the sales manager, along came this message from Chicago: "I cume hear and sole them haff a million."

Fearful if he did—and afraid if he didn't—fire the ignorant salesman, the sales manager dumped the problem in the president's lap.

The following morning, the ivory-towered sales department members were amazed to see posted on the bulletin board above the two letters written by the ignorant salesman this memo from the president:

We ben spendin two much time trying to spel instead of trying to sel.
Let's watch those sails. I want everybody should read these letters from

Gooch who is on the rode doin a grate job for us and you should go out and do like he done.

I love that story so much I've had it laminated, and I carry it along with a few other "essentials" when I speak. Okay, so if we lead salespeople, we would obviously prefer ones who can both sell and spell. But you get the point. Results speak loudly—to those we work for and to those we lead.

When you lead a productive team of people who like working together, you give others a reason to want to work with you, to follow you. For example, if you and a friend were picking players for a basketball game, and you could choose between me and LeBron James, it's clear who you'd pick: the guy who wins championships, not the guy who played basketball in high school more than fifty years ago! You want the guy who can produce and inspire his teammates to produce right along with him.

LEVEL 4: PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

If you gain influence with your team on Levels 1, 2, and 3, people will consider you a fantastic leader. You will get a lot done, and you will be considered successful. But there are higher levels of leadership, because the greatest leaders do more than just get things done.

There are so many different kinds of leaders, both male and female. They come in all shapes and sizes, ages and degrees of experience, races and nationalities, from genius to average intelligence. What separates the good from the great?

Leaders become great not because of their power, but because of their ability to empower others. Success without a successor is ultimately failure. To create anything lasting, to develop a team or organization that can grow and improve, to build anything for the future, a leader's main responsibility is to develop other people: to help them reach their personal potential, to help them do their jobs more effectively, and to help them learn to become leaders themselves. This kind of people development leads to *reproduction*.

People development has a multiplying effect. Teams and organizations

Leaders become great not because of their power, but because of their ability to empower others.

go to a whole new level when leaders begin developing others. One team develops enough leaders to create additional teams. One division, operation, or location develops enough leaders to create additional ones.

Because everything rises and falls on leadership, having more and better leaders always leads to having a better organization.

The People Development level has another positive side effect: loyalty to the leader. People tend to be loyal to the mentor who helps improve their lives. If you watch a leader develop influence through the levels, you can see how the relationship progresses. On Level 1, the team member *has to follow* the leader. On Level 2, the team member *wants to follow* the leader. On Level 3, the team member *appreciates and admires* the leader because of what he or she has done for the team. On Level 4, the team member *becomes loyal* to the leader because of what the leader has done for him or her personally. You win people's hearts and minds by helping them grow personally.

If you don't believe in the messenger, you won't believe the message.

—JAMES M. KOUZES AND BARRY Z. POSNER

Not every good leader works to develop influence on Level 4. In fact, most leaders aren't even aware that Level 4 exists. They are so focused on their own productivity and that of their team that they don't realize they should be developing people. If

that describes you, I want to help you. I've created some questions you should ask yourself about developing people that can help position you for success on Level 4:

1. Am I Passionate About My Personal Growth?

Only growing people are effective at growing others. If you still have that fire within you, people will feel it around you. I'm seventy years old, and I'm still fixated on growth.

2. *Does My Growth Journey Have Credibility?*

The first thing people ask themselves when you offer to help them grow is whether you have anything to offer that can help them. The key to that answer is your credibility. In their book *The Leadership Challenge*, James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner expound on what they call the Kouzes-Posner First Law of Leadership: If you don't believe in the messenger, you won't believe the message. They go on to say of credibility, "Loyalty, commitment, energy, and productivity depend on it."⁷

3. *Are People Attracted to Me Because of My Growth?*

People want to learn from leaders they see growing and learning. One year at the Leadership Open, which my nonprofit organization EQUIP hosted at Pebble Beach, many people remarked about the incredible growth they were seeing in Mark Cole, my CEO. That kind of dramatic yet humble growth is very attractive to people.

4. *Am I Successful in the Areas Where I Want to Develop Others?*

You cannot give what you do not have. When I develop people, I try to help them primarily in areas where I'm successful: speaking, writing, and leadership. Do you know the areas where I never give advice? Singing. Technology. Golf. Nobody wants to hear what I have to say about these subjects. I'd be wasting their time and mine.

5. *Have I Crossed Over the Spend Time / Invest Time Line?*

Most people spend time *with* others. Few invest time *in* them. If you want to succeed at Level 4, you need to become an *investor* in people. This means adding value but also expecting to see a return on your investment—not in personal gain, but in impact. The return you're looking for is in people's personal growth, the betterment of their leadership, the impact of their work, the value they add to the team and organization. I learned this lesson at age forty when I realized my time was limited and I could

not work any harder or longer than I already was. (I'll tell you more about this in chapter 2.) The only solution was to reproduce myself by investing in others. As they got better, the team got better. And so did I.

6. *Do I Have a Teachable Way of Life?*

Teachable people are the best teachers. To develop people, I need to remain teachable. That means wanting to learn, paying attention to what I learn, desiring to share what I learn, and knowing with whom to share it.

7. *Am I Willing to Be a Vulnerable Role Model and Coach?*

Developing people by investing in them doesn't mean pretending you have all the answers. It means being authentic, admitting what you don't know as much as what you do, and learning as much as you can from the people you're developing. Learning is a two-way street. Continuing to develop myself as I develop others brings me great joy.

8. *Do the People I Develop Succeed?*

The ultimate goal in developing people is to help them transform their lives. Teaching may help someone's life *improve*. True development helps an individual's life *change*. How can you tell if that's happened? The person you've invested in succeeds. Not only is that the greatest sign of transformation, it's the greatest reward to a leader who develops people.

How did you do? The more yeses you can honestly answer to the eight questions, the better you're positioned to develop people. If your noes outnumbered your yeses, don't lose heart. Make growth your goal to set you up for future success on Level 4. You won't regret it because this is where long-term success occurs. Your commitment to developing leaders will ensure ongoing growth in the organization, in the people you lead, and in your leadership impact. Do whatever you can to achieve and stay on this level.

LEVEL 5: PINNACLE

The final level of leadership is the Pinnacle. If you read the original version of this book, you may recall that I called this level *Personhood*. But I think *Pinnacle* is a more descriptive name. This highest level is based on *reputation*. This is rarified air. Only a few people reach this level. Those who do have led well and proven their leadership over a lifetime, have invested in other leaders and raised them up to Level 4, and have developed influence not only in their own organizations, but beyond them.

People at the Pinnacle level are known not only outside of their own organizations, but outside of their fields, their countries, and even their times. For example, Jack Welch is a Level 5 leader in business. Nelson Mandela was a Level 5 leader in government. Martin Luther King Jr. was a Level 5 leader among social activists. Leonardo da Vinci was a Level 5 leader in the arts and engineering. Aristotle was a Level 5 leader in education and philosophy.

Can everyone reach this level of leadership? No. Should we strive for it? Absolutely. But we shouldn't focus on it. Why? Because we can't manufacture respect in others, nor can we demand it. Respect must be freely given to us by others, so it's not within our control. For that reason, we should focus instead on developing influence on Levels 2, 3, and 4 and work hard to sustain it day after day, year after year, decade after decade. If we do that, we've done all we can do.

NAVIGATING THE LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP

I hope you can use the 5 Levels of Leadership as a clear visual reminder of how influence works. It's a paradigm *for* leadership and a pathway *to* leadership. Now that you can see the model, I want to give you a few insights that will help you not only to embrace it but to navigate using it as a leader:

- The 5 Levels of Leadership can be applied to every area of your life, both personal and professional.

- You are on a different level with each individual person in your life.
- Each time you add a level in your relationship with another person, your level of influence goes up.
- You never leave behind a previous level once you achieve a new one. The levels build and add to one another. They are not replaced.
- If you skip a level to try to speed up the process, you will have to circle back and earn that level anyway for the longevity of the relationship.
- The higher you go up the levels, the longer it takes.
- Each time you change jobs or join a new circle of people, you start on the lowest level and have to work your way up again.
- Once a level is earned, it must be maintained. No one ever “arrives” as a leader. Nothing is permanent in leadership.
- Just as you can add influence at a level, you can also lose influence at a level.
- It takes less time to lose a level than it does to earn it.

At this point in my life and career, the 5 Levels of Leadership have become second nature to me. As soon as I meet people, I begin working on the relationship. As soon as we’ve developed a connection, I try to add Production and achieve something together. And I begin looking for ways to add value to people and invest in them. I believe you can develop your influence in the same way I have. All it takes is will and intentionality.

I once read a poem called “My Influence.” I don’t know who the author is, but its message left an impact on me:

My life shall touch a dozen lives
 Before this day is done,
 Leave countless marks for good or ill,
 Ere sets the evening sun;
 This is the wish I always wish,
 The prayer I always pray:
 Lord, may my life help other lives
 It touches by the way.⁸

If you're like me, you have goals. You want not only to achieve success, but also experience significance. You want your leadership to make a difference. The level you achieve is more dependent on your influence than on any other single factor. That's why influence is so important. You just don't know how many lives you'll touch. All you can do is develop your influence so that when opportunities come, you can make the best of them. Never doubt the power of one person of influence. Think of Aristotle. He mentored Alexander the Great, and Alexander conquered the world.

DEVELOPING THE INFLUENCER WITHIN YOU

One of the great challenges of applying the 5 Levels of Leadership is that you must earn each level of influence with every person in your life. While it's true that your level of influence with others is either increasing or decreasing every day, you will find it beneficial to focus your attention on intentionally increasing your influence with only a limited number of people at first.

For that reason, I suggest you pick two people in your life right now with whom to intentionally build your influence. Choose one important person from your professional life, maybe your boss, a key team member, a colleague, or a client. And choose one important person from your personal life, perhaps your spouse, your child, a parent, or a neighbor. (Yes, it is possible to be on only the Position level with your spouse or child, and yes, you have to earn—or re-earn—influence at the higher levels.) If you are a high-capacity person with lots of ambition and energy, you may choose *three* people.

First, determine which level of leadership you are currently on with each person. Then use the following guidelines to begin earning the level above your current one and to strengthen your influence at the lower levels.

Level 1: Position—Influence Based on Rights

- Know your role or job description thoroughly.
- Do your job with consistent excellence.
- Do more than expected.
- Accept responsibility for yourself and your leadership.
- Learn from every leadership opportunity.
- Be aware of the history that impacts personal dynamics.
- Don't rely on your position or title to help you lead.

Level 2: Permission—Influence Based on Relationship

- Value the other person.
- Learn to see through the other person's eyes by asking questions.
- Care more about the person than about the rules.
- Include the other person in your journey by shifting your focus from *me* to *we*.
- Make the other person's success your goal.
- Practice servant leadership.

Level 3: Production—Influence Based on Results

- Initiate and accept responsibility for your own personal growth.
- Develop accountability for results, beginning with yourself.
- Lead by example and produce results.
- Help the other person find and give his or her best contribution.

Level 4: People Development—Influence Based on Reproduction

- Embrace the idea that people are your most valuable asset.
- Be open and honest about your growth journey.
- Expose the other person to growth and leadership opportunities.
- Place the person in the best place to be successful.

Level 5: Pinnacle—Influence Based on Respect

- Focus your influence on the most promising 20 percent of the people you lead.
- Teach and encourage them to develop other high-level leaders.
- Leverage your influence to advance the organization.
- Use your influence outside the organization to make a difference.

If you would like additional help with the process of developing your leadership, please visit MaxwellLeader.com to receive free bonus materials I've created to help you. And be sure to take the free leadership self-assessment.

THE ULTIMATE TEST OF LEADERSHIP:
CREATING POSITIVE CHANGE

Several years ago I had the opportunity to play at Augusta National Golf Club as the guest of Lou Holtz. If you're a college football fan, you know about Lou. He's an American icon. In 1988 he coached the Notre Dame Fighting Irish football team to an undefeated season and a national championship. One of my favorite quotes from Lou, which he said the first time I met him over lunch, is "I've coached good players and I've coached bad players. I'm a better coach with good players."

Lou is also known for his dry wit. I spent three unforgettable days with Lou at Augusta. During the day we enjoyed playing golf on one of the world's best courses, and Lou kept us in stitches. Lou was the first off the tee that first day. He teed up his ball, hit it, and immediately started walking toward the hole. *What's he doing?* I thought to myself. I turned to Harvey Mackay, Lou's good friend, who was playing with us, and said, "Lou didn't wait for the rest of us to hit."

"He never does," replied Harvey. "He can't stand still."

It was true. All three days, Lou would hit off the tee and start walking. Needless to say, many times we would yell, "Fore," as our golf balls flew toward Lou. He would just cover the back of his head with his arm and keep on walking. I've never seen anything like it.

If we were playing too slowly for Lou, he would say, "Hey, try to keep

up with the group behind you.” If one of us was taking too much time lining up a putt, Lou would say, “Putt before I die, will you?”

COACHING CHANGE

I’ll never forget those rounds on the golf course, but my favorite times at Augusta were when we were sitting in the cabin late at night and talking to Lou about his college coaching career. From 1969 to 2004 Lou coached at six different universities. None of the teams were winners when he took over. Arkansas had the best record of the six: 5-1. All the others had lost most of their games. Two teams had records of 1-10. What’s remarkable is that by his second year of coaching every team, not only did they have a winning record, but every team was invited to play in a college bowl game. That’s an amazing accomplishment. Leading a team to that kind of success once or twice is a major feat—but six times?

I listened with interest as our “cabin conversation” centered around making the changes necessary to turn a losing football team into a winning one in such a short time.

Lou Holtz is a leader who understands how to create positive change. He’s what I like to call a *U-turn leader*, a person who is able to take an organization that is heading downward, stop the negative momentum, change the direction it’s heading, and turn it upward, creating positive momentum. George Kelly, a career coach who worked with Holtz at Notre Dame, said Lou had three qualities all great coaches possess: he didn’t take anything for granted, he was an excellent teacher, and he was superbly organized.¹ On top of that, Lou is a positive visionary. He changed the cultures of the teams he led. That created his teams’ success.

Being able to turn an organization around by being a positive change agent is the true test of a great leader. Nearly anyone can get out in front of people who are already going in the right direction and encourage them to keep going. Very few can make the changes necessary to turn around a group of people who are headed the wrong direction.

LEADING CHANGE CAN BE DIFFICULT

Any person who has led change knows it's challenging. But I believe that people do not naturally resist change; they resist *being* changed. Recently I saw a two-frame cartoon in which the leader asks, "Who wants change?" and every hand is raised. But in the second frame, when he asks, "Who wants to change?" not one hand is raised. That pretty much characterizes human nature. We want the benefits of positive change without the pain of making any changes ourselves. Why is that? I believe there are several reasons:

I. PEOPLE FEEL AWKWARD AND SELF-CONSCIOUS DOING SOMETHING NEW

Change is awkward—just ask your hands. Don't believe me? Try this: clasp your hands together palm to palm with your fingers interlaced. Which thumb is on top? Everybody naturally favors putting one thumb over the other and alternating their other fingers accordingly. Is your right thumb on top or your left? Whichever way you clasped your hands feels natural. You'll naturally do it that same way every time.

People do not naturally resist change; they resist *being* changed.

Now switch them. Unclasp your hands and interlace your fingers again, but this time, put the *other* thumb on top. How does that feel? Awkward, I bet. If you're like most people, you'll feel a strong impulse to switch them back to your regular way.

I had a similar problem with my golf game. When I graduated from high school, I received a set of golf clubs as a gift. I welcomed the opportunity to try out a new sport, so I just started playing golf without any kind of coaching. I was a reasonably good athlete, so I was able to get out on the course and play. But I never could improve my game, no matter what I tried. When I finally took golf lessons from a pro, he told me my self-taught grip and swing were the things holding me back. His solution was to ask me to change *everything*.

Boy, did that feel awkward. I knew I needed to make the changes, but

none of them felt right. Over the next few months, anytime I was under pressure to make a good shot, I found myself returning to the security of my old grip, because I felt more comfortable with my old way of playing, even though the new way afforded me the opportunity for great improvement. Over time I became comfortable with the change, but it took awhile.

Most people are more comfortable with old problems than new solutions, because the new represents the unknown. Author and speaker Marilyn Ferguson put it this way: “It’s not so much that we are afraid of change or so in love with the old ways, but it’s that place in between that we fear. . . . It’s like being between trapezes. It’s Linus when his blanket is in the dryer. There’s nothing to hold on to.”

2. PEOPLE INITIALLY FOCUS ON WHAT THEY WILL HAVE TO GIVE UP

When people hear that change is coming, the first thing they do is ask, “How is this going to affect me?” Why? Because they are worried that they will have to give up something. Sometimes that question makes a lot of sense, such as when you’re in danger of losing your job or your home. But most of the time, life is a series of trades anyway. Poet Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “For everything you gain, you lose something.” So it’s unrealistic to expect not to give up *anything*. However, many people are holding on so tightly to what they have that they are willing to forgo gaining anything—even progress. As leaders, we need to help people overcome this attitude.

I think personality type and life experience impact people’s attitudes in this area. For example, some people are savers while others are throwers. I’m a thrower. As soon as I think I don’t need something, I toss it in the trash. I don’t think there’s been a day in my adult life that I haven’t

For everything you gain,
you lose something.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

had to dig around in the trash can for a piece of paper I threw away before I was actually done with it. Throwing things away gives me great joy. It’s just one of my quirks.

Most people are more like my wife, Margaret. She’s a saver. If she thinks we might

use something in the future, she sees no reason to get rid of it. I'll say this: she's not a hoarder. And she's very organized, so our home isn't cluttered. But if I had my way, our motto would be "If we buy something new today, give something else away."

Not only do we want to hold on to things, we also tend to hold on to ideas and ways of doing things. Authors Eric Harvey and Steve Ventura have written about this human tendency:

The fact is, we all carry a certain amount of counterproductive cerebral baggage that weighs us down . . . and holds us back.

Our loads include everything from once valid beliefs and practices that have outlived their usefulness and applicability—to misinformation and misconceptions that we've accepted (and even embraced) without much examination or thought.

Why care about "baggage"? Because it negatively impacts us, the people we work with, the environment we work in, and the results we get. Simply stated, whatever we accept and believe determines how we behave . . . and how we behave determines what we achieve (or don't achieve).²

Their solution? "Our brains are like closets," they say. "Over time they are filled with things we no longer use—things that don't fit. Every once in a while they need to be cleaned out."³

Peter Drucker, who has been called the founder of modern management, said that he believed businesses needed to put every product and process they have on trial for their lives every three years. Otherwise, he believed, the competition would pass the business by. Bill Gates had a similar perspective. He recognized that the products Microsoft made would become obsolete in three years. "The only question," said Gates, "is whether we will make it obsolete or someone else will." I'd say he understands the price of change and is willing to pay it as a leader.

3. PEOPLE ARE AFRAID OF BEING RIDICULED

People who do something different always run the risk of being mocked or ridiculed, and that can be a great deterrent to change. Author

Malcolm Gladwell recently did a podcast on this subject that looked at Hall of Fame basketball player Wilt Chamberlain. It was called “The Big Man Can’t Shoot.”⁴

Chamberlain, who played professionally from 1959 to 1973, was a dominating center who set multiple NBA records. But he was also known for being a notoriously bad free throw shooter. His career average was 51 percent.⁵ But in the 1961–62 season, Chamberlain tried changing something in his game to improve his free throws. Instead of doing the traditional overhead shot that nearly all basketball players currently use, Chamberlain tried using the style employed by Rick Barry, who at that time was the game’s best free throw shooter. Chamberlain used the “granny shot,” where he held the ball between his legs and shot it underhand.

Rick Barry’s career free throw percentage was over 89 percent.⁶ In the podcast with Gladwell, Barry explained why he decided to use that motion to shoot free throws his entire career:

From the physics standpoint, it’s a much better way to shoot. Less things that can go wrong, less things that you have to worry about repeating properly in order for it to be successful. But the other thing is . . . who walks around like this [raising his hand up in front of him]? This is not a natural position. When I shoot underhand in free throws, where are my arms? Hanging straight down, the way they are normally. And so I’m totally and completely relaxed. It’s not in the situation where I have to worry about my muscles getting tense or tight. And then the shot itself, it’s a much softer shot. So many of my shots, even if they’re a little off, they hit so nice and soft, and they’ll still fall in the basket.⁷

While experimenting with Barry’s underhand shooting method for free throws, on March 2, 1962, Chamberlain did something no one had ever done before and no one has ever done since: he scored 100 points in an NBA game. That night, 28 of those points came from free throws. He made 28 of 30 from the line.

Despite his success, Chamberlain gave up the “granny shot” and went back to his old way of shooting—and his old habit of missing. Why?

He was embarrassed by it. Gladwell quotes what Chamberlain wrote in his autobiography: “I felt silly, like a sissy, shooting underhanded. I know I was wrong. I know some of the best foul shooters in history shot that way. Even now, the best one in the NBA, Rick Barry, shoots underhanded. I just couldn’t do it.”⁸

Some people are more easily embarrassed than others. While Rick Barry didn’t care what people thought of him and shot free throws in a style others mocked, Wilt Chamberlain cared what others thought and didn’t want to be ridiculed. As a leader, when you introduce changes, you have to take this kind of fear into account, and you have to be aware that people have different levels of tolerance to ridicule.

3. PEOPLE PERSONALIZE CHANGE AND MAY FEEL ALONE IN THE PROCESS

Most of the time when people experience change, particularly in businesses and organizations, they are not alone in the process, but they do often feel that way. And their emotions can overwhelm them. When anxiety rises, motivation falls. As leaders, we can become impatient and want them to get a grip and get over it. Instead, we need to show patience, acknowledge their humanness, and work with them. Not only will this help them process the change, but it will help us to influence them more quickly and move them forward.

I confess that I didn’t do this well as a young leader. I would often encourage people to ignore their feelings during times of change. I would tell them, “It’s no big deal. We’re all in this together. Don’t worry about it.” But that’s like a dentist saying, “This won’t hurt a bit.” When you hear that, you know he’s right. It won’t hurt a bit. It will hurt a lot!

As a young leader, I also made the mistake of treating change as if it were an event instead of a process. It took me awhile to realize that people are always at different levels in their readiness to change. You can’t just announce a change, implement it, and move on. That only causes resistance. You have to give people time and allow them to process changes. While not everyone will get on board or “catch up,” many will if you are willing to help them. Remember: the people are why you do what

you do as a leader. How far you can travel isn't the point; it's how far you are able to take your people. That's the purpose of leadership.

How far you can travel isn't the point; it's how far you are able to take your people.

Leading people through change can be a lot like the old jokes about how many people it takes to change a light bulb. It can be challenging and humorous. Here are some favorites of those jokes I recently came across:

Q: How many actors does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Only one. They don't like to share the spotlight.

Q: How many academics does it take to change a light bulb?

A: None. That's what research students are for.

Q: How many aerobics instructors does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Five. Four to do it in perfect synchrony and one to stand there going, "To the left, and to the left, and to the left, and to the left, and take it out, and put it down, and pick it up, and put it in, and to the right, and to the right, and to the right, and to the right . . ."

Q: How many aerospace engineers does it take to change a light bulb?

A: None. It doesn't take a rocket scientist, you know.

Q: How many people at an American football game does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Three. One to change it and two to tip the entire contents of the ice bucket over the coach to congratulate him.

Q: How many American football players does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Two. One to screw it in and the other to recover the fumble.

Q: How many anglers does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Five, and you should've seen the light bulb! It must have been *this* big! Five of us were barely enough!

Q: How many archaeologists does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Three. One to change it and two to argue about how old the old one is.

Q: How many armies does it take to change a light bulb?

A: At least five. The Germans to start it; the French to give up really easily after only trying for a little while; the Italians to make a start, get nowhere, and then try again from the other side; the Americans to turn up late and finish it off and take all the credit; and the Swiss to pretend nothing out of the ordinary is happening.

Q: How many auto mechanics does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Six. One to force it with a hammer and five to go out for more bulbs.⁹

I think the real question is, how many people does it take to create positive change? The answer is one person who is willing to lead the people involved in making the change through a process and do his best to take everyone with him.

WE OVERESTIMATE THE EVENT AND UNDERESTIMATE THE PROCESS

After about five years of leadership experience, I finally figured out that I couldn't just change something and expect everyone to happily fall in behind me. At age twenty-seven, I was facing the need to introduce a big organizational change—the construction of a new building and the repurposing of the existing one—and I realized that if I was going to succeed as a leader, I would need to develop a process to plan what needed to be changed, communicate it to the people, help them process the changes mentally and emotionally, and put the plan into action.

To do that, I developed something I called PLAN AHEAD. Yes, it's an acrostic. That may seem hokey, but it makes it easy to remember and easy to teach to other leaders. I've used it for almost fifty years, and it has worked! And I believe it will work for you. Here's what the acrostic represents:

Predetermine the change that is needed.

Lay out your steps.

Adjust your priorities.

Notify key people.

Allow time for acceptance.

Head into action.

Expect problems.

Always point to the successes.

Daily review your progress.

And here are the individual steps. I encourage you to use them as you face the ultimate test of leadership: creating positive change.

PREDETERMINE THE CHANGE THAT IS NEEDED

My friend Rick Warren, the founder of Saddleback Church, said, “The greatest enemy of tomorrow’s success is yesterday’s success.”¹⁰ To be a good leader, you cannot become complacent. You cannot become satisfied with today’s success. That means you need to not only welcome change, but champion it. If you don’t, your team, department, or organization will be in trouble. You only need to read the first edition of the book *The 100 Best Companies to Work For in America* to know that’s true. It was published in 1984. When the second edition was published nine years later, nearly half of the original companies no longer existed.

The greatest enemy of tomorrow’s success is yesterday’s success.

—RICK WARREN

Identifying what needs changing in our organizations can be difficult, because we can become so accustomed to the problems that we no longer see them. That’s what happened at British Rail in the 1970s. In 1977, the rail company’s chairman, Sir Peter Parker, was trying to decide whether to give the organization’s advertising business to a huge, established agency or to the smaller, newer Allen Brady and Marsh (ABM). Parker arrived at ABM with other British Rail executives, where they found the agency’s lobby to be a grimy mess. The

ashtrays were overflowing, half-empty coffee cups were left here and there, and magazines lay on the floor.

The receptionist didn't make the situation any better. One account says she ignored the group while making a personal phone call.¹¹ Another says she smoked a cigarette while filing her nails and answered, "Dunno" to a question about how long they would have to wait.¹²

After waiting twenty minutes, Parker told the receptionist they were leaving. At that moment, Peter Marsh, the chairman of ABM, stepped into the reception area and said, "You've just seen what the public think of British Rail. Now let's see what we can do to put it right."

As a leader, you carry the responsibility for reviewing what your team does and looking for what needs to be changed. I like this standard for review:

- If you've done something for one year—look at it carefully.
- If you've done it for two years—look at it with suspicion.
- If you've done it for five years—stop looking at it and do something to change it.

The first step is always predetermining what needs to be changed. Once you've recognized that, you can start to look at the second step.

LAY OUT YOUR STEPS

As I mentioned, I developed the PLAN AHEAD process in response to a big leadership challenge at my second church, in Lancaster, Ohio. We were running out of space in our current facility, so I could see we needed to make changes. We needed to construct a new building and repurpose the old one. The problem was that the fifteen hundred people loved that facility and didn't want to change it. Furthermore, I needed to raise the money to build from that same group of people. If I didn't lay out my steps carefully, I risked alienating everyone and failing to take them where I knew they needed to go.

I spent a good amount of time thinking through the process and carefully laid out my blueprint for successful change. I decided I needed

to ask questions, listen to people's answers, discuss the challenges, and empower key leaders to search for answers to our space problem. I let that run its course for a year. And as I hoped and expected, the other leaders came to the same conclusion I had, and recommended the course of action I also believed was best. But by then they came to the table with evidence to support their conclusion, they had bought into it personally, and they had convinced others to join them.

Was I happy to move so slowly? No, but I knew the task was huge. And as the saying goes, how do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. That's what we were doing. And each step forward increased our confidence and strengthened my leadership.

ADJUST YOUR PRIORITIES

In the movie *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, the main character tells his daughter, "I hope you live the life you are proud of. If you find that you are not, I hope you find the strength to start over again." In other words, he was saying that if we want to change for the better, we need to revise our priorities to be successful.

I hope you live the life you are proud of. If you find that you are not, I hope you find the strength to start over again.

—THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON

The biggest danger for leaders at this stage of the process is to confuse cosmetic changes for critical ones. Cosmetic changes are easier to make but are not effective because they don't address things that really matter. They occur outside in. Critical changes are made from the inside out, and are always more difficult to facilitate.

Leaders who focus on the wrong things are like Charlie Brown from the *Peanuts* comic strip by Charles Schulz. Charlie tells his friend Linus, "For as long as I've lived, whenever I put on my shoes, I've always put the left one on first. Then suddenly, last week I put the right one on first. Every day this week I've been putting my right shoe on first, and you know what? It hasn't changed my life a bit."

Critical changes make an impact. They also cost you something in

time, energy, resources, creativity, goodwill, or influence. If they *don't* cost you, you need to question if real change is occurring. Of course, not changing also costs you. If I had chosen to throw in the towel as we were running out of space in Lancaster, the entire organization would have plateaued, and it would have been the beginning of the end. Instead, as the core leadership team came together, we changed our priorities and prepared for the next steps in the process.

NOTIFY KEY PEOPLE

Good leaders don't share information about changes with everyone in the organization at one time. They don't try to make communication "fair." They make it strategic. As a leader, before you let the masses know what's going on, you need to meet with key people and communicate with them.

Which key people? I identify them by asking myself two questions: "Who needs to get behind this to make it fly? And who actually has to fly it?" The answers to those questions point me to the people who need to know about changes before everyone else does.

I meet first with the people whose influence is needed to make the changes fly, because if they don't buy in, the plan is never going to work. I'll need to work with them to earn their buy-in. Usually these meetings occur one-on-one or in very small groups. I often take an approach that I wrote about in the chapter "Share a Secret with Someone" in my book *25 Ways to Win with People*. By telling them about the change before it's public knowledge, I'm giving them valuable information, making them feel special, and including them on the journey. It's an act of inclusion that most people appreciate. This personal approach also allows for open discussion, honest reactions, questions, and objections.

I think of these connection times as the meetings before the meeting. If these go well, I share the information with the people who care the most: the ones who will carry out the implementation of the plan. After that, I begin to hold other meetings with larger groups throughout the organization.

And if a meeting before the meeting doesn't go well, then I meet with

those key individuals again, and keep meeting with them until we can work through their objections and they buy into the change. The key players on the team or in the organization must be willing participants and involved in the process for it to work.

That takes care of the PLAN part of the process. Now let's look at the next part based on the word AHEAD.

ALLOW TIME FOR ACCEPTANCE

People usually take a long time to accept change. And usually that acceptance goes through three phases:

1. It will not work.
2. It will cost too much.
3. I thought it was a good idea all along.

Seriously though, allowing time for acceptance is a challenge leaders face because they often see more and before their people do. And the announcement of change can be confusing, misunderstood, or even chaos-producing on the team or within the organization.

Recently I was reading *8 Steps to Achieve Your Destiny: Lead Your Life with Purpose* by my friend Sam Chand. In a chapter called "New Perspectives," he wrote about the need for leaders to keep changing, but his observations equally apply to changes a leader implements in an organization. Sam wrote:

Change is always necessary. We cannot assume that just because something works today, it will continue to work tomorrow. You must either evolve or stagnate.

Most leaders [and nearly all followers] only recognize the need for change after decline has set in; they don't take action until something is broken. This is illustrated by point B on Charles Handy's Sigmoid Curve. At that point, the best they can do is put the brakes on to slow it down, begin some crisis management, and put a spin on it.

When you're ahead of the curve and making changes (point A),

no one may understand what you're doing or why you're doing it. That period between implementing change and others beginning to see what you saw is aptly known as *chaos*.¹³

Good leaders always allow time for acceptance. But when they find that acceptance is slow in coming or the people are experiencing the chaos Sam Chand described, they take additional measures to help people adapt to change. Here are three things you can do in situations such as these.

1. Slow Down

If you plow ahead and don't take into consideration the slow response of your people, they will begin to make negative assumptions about you. They might think:

- You lacked preparation.
- You're hiding the real agenda.
- You're railroading through your agenda.
- You lack concern for what people think and feel.

Any one of these beliefs will diminish your influence. And they all create greater barriers to change. The solution is to slow down and give your people time. Keep encouraging them. Keep answering questions. But don't force the issue.

2. Make Your Communication Clear and Simple

A second thing you can do is work hard to communicate clearly and simply as people process the changes and come around. Academia takes something simple and makes it complicated; a communicator takes something complicated and makes it simple. As a leader who strives to simplify my message, I ask myself some questions to help me communicate more effectively.

- Do I understand what I am going to say?
- Will they understand what I am going to say?
- Will they be able to tell others what I say?
- Will others understand what they say?

Why do I do that? Because people will not accept what they cannot understand. In addition, you want the people who *do* process and accept the change to help others do the same. They can do that only if they can communicate the ideas clearly. By simplifying the message before you deliver it, you give people who buy in something clear and memorable to say to others as they advocate for change.

Academia takes something simple and makes it complicated; a communicator takes something complicated and makes it simple.

A fantastic example of this can be seen in an initiative by Roberto Goizueta, Coca-Cola's chairman, director, and CEO from 1980 to 1997. During his tenure, he made Coca-Cola the most recognized brand in the world. In his book *212 Leadership*, author Mac Anderson wrote of the Cuban-born Goizueta:

Though English was his third language, his success is primarily attributed to his ability to encapsulate complex ideas and present them in concise, compelling fashion. Roberto was best known for his oft-repeated description of Coke's infinite growth potential:

Each of the six billion people on this planet drinks, on average, sixty-four ounces of fluids daily, of which only two ounces are Coca-Cola.

Coke's employees were blown away by the originality and audacity of the idea when Goizueta first spoke it. Eventually, closing the "sixty-two gap" became a centerpiece of inspiration and motivation within the company.¹⁴

The idea of closing the sixty-two gap was a clear, simple, and easily repeatable message that could be used to communicate change. And the message didn't weaken in power as it was repeated to others.

3. *Build In Time for People to Process Ideas*

If you are working with people in a more formal environment, such as board meetings, and you need to give them time to accept change, one of the best ways to do that is to develop a meeting agenda that creates processing time for them. For many years I used the following format with my board of directors:

- **Information Items:** I began with items of interest to the people attending the meeting. Typically, these were positive items that boosted morale and started the meeting off on a high energy level.
- **Study Items:** These were issues we would need to discuss, but not vote on. Introducing such items one or more meetings ahead of the time of decision making allowed everyone to share ideas or ask questions without the pressure of advocating a particular point of view. If a study item involved a major change, I often kept it in this category for several meetings until everyone had time to process through the issues and come to agreement.
- **Action Items:** I put items in this section only if they had been previously listed as study items, we had discussed and processed them thoroughly, and I was certain that everyone was ready to make a positive decision on them.

By the time most leaders have recognized the need for change, analyzed the problems and possible solutions, and strategized the plan to implement it, they are ready for action. But trying to take action before the key people accept the change leads to disaster. My friend Norwood Davis, CFO of the John Maxwell Company, summed it up with a formula that he recently shared with me:

$$E = Q \times A$$

That stands for Effectiveness = Quality \times Acceptance. And as Norwood reminded me, if you multiply an idea with a quality value of

ten times a zero acceptance rate, its effectiveness will still equal zero. Acceptance is key to getting results as a leader.

HEAD INTO ACTION

Once you have the buy-in of the key players, the change train can finally leave the station and start moving. Of course, that doesn't mean everyone will be on board. To paraphrase an observation by former senator Robert Kennedy: 20 percent of the people are against everything 100 percent of the time.¹⁵ But you can't wait for everyone. If you have the influence and the people who will execute the change, you have enough to get started, and many others will get on board in time.

Often I hear people say, "Vision unites people." I disagree. Vision divides people. It separates the people who will from the ones who won't—and that's a good thing. When you start heading into action, people get "off the fence," and you find out who's who. You never know the level of your people's commitment until you call them to action. You want to enlist the committed people to help you.

You never know the level of your people's commitment until you call them to action.

How do you know the likelihood that people will join with you? You need to take stock of your personal influence. Every leader has a certain amount of "change" in his or her pocket. By that I mean emotional support in the form of bargaining chips. Every time the leader does something positive, it increases the amount of change he possesses.

Anytime a leader does something that's perceived as negative, it weakens the relationship and costs the leader some of the "change" in his pocket. If a leader keeps doing things that weaken the relationship, it's possible for him to become bankrupt with his people.

Always remember: It takes "change" to make change. The more "change" you have in your pocket, the more changes you can make in the lives of the people. The less "change," the harder it is to move into action.

EXPECT PROBLEMS

Anytime anyone initiates any kind of movement, problems arise. It's as the old adage says: motion causes friction. Some of those problems come from unforeseen difficulties. Others come from people and their objections. People inevitably exaggerate about the joys of the past, saying it was so much better back then—even if it wasn't. They complain about the pain of the present, as if life were supposed to be conflict-free—it's not. And they fixate on their fears for the future—even the future isn't promised to us. But these reactions are perfectly natural.

I used to make the mistake of taking personally people's resistance to changing or pushing toward progress. People would push back, and I'd wonder, *Why can't they see it? Why don't they trust me? Can't we just get on with it?* I had to coach myself to remember that it wasn't personal. Besides, leading change is already difficult enough without complicating it with unwanted emotions.

The best solution to solving problems is to be proactive on the front end by anticipating the worst-case scenarios:

- **Think the Worst First:** What possibly can go wrong? Spend time running through every possibility you can think of, and enlist other leaders to help you be prepared.
- **Speak to the Worst First:** Let people know that you know how they feel and what they think. And if you discover problems, acknowledge them. Many times people's greatest worry is that they know more than their leaders do and their leaders aren't prepared to work on problems. When you assure people that you know what's happening and you're working on it, you give them a sense of security.
- **Answer the Worst First:** When people start to ask questions and express their worries and concerns, don't avoid the discussion or paint a rosy picture. Give answers.
- **Encourage Them Through the Worst First:** People desire the encouragement of their leaders. If you let people know you're in it together and that you need them, they are likely to want to work with you.

Even the most highly proactive leaders who work to be out ahead of problems still encounter unanticipated difficulties. But if you possess a mind-set in which you *expect* problems and you're proactive, you've done all you can to give the needed changes a chance to succeed.

ALWAYS POINT TO THE SUCCESSES

In their book *Change Is Good . . . You Go First*, Mac Anderson and Tom Feltenstein wrote about the importance of communicating positive reinforcement:

I'm sure you've heard the three keys to purchasing real estate . . . location, location, location. Well, you'll now hear the three keys to inspiring change . . . *reinforce, reinforce, reinforce*. Many leaders in times of change grossly underestimate the need for continuous reinforcement. *In a perfect world we hear something once, record it in our brain, and never need to hear it again. But in reality, our words are far from perfect.* During a time of change we have doubts, fears, and occasional disappointments. Sometimes there are friends, family, and co-workers reinforcing those doubts saying, "It won't work."¹⁶

With all the challenges, obstacles, conflict, and naysayers working against people's efforts to implement change, we as leaders need to encourage our people to keep going and keep doing the right things. One of the best ways we can do that is to celebrate their successes, both large and small.

One of my idols, John Wooden, the highly successful coach of the UCLA basketball team, always emphasized the team aspect of the game. Anytime a player received a good pass allowing him to score, Wooden used to encourage the player who received the pass to point to the player who threw it to him to share the credit. It's been said that when one of Wooden's players asked, "Coach, what happens if I point to the player who gave me the assist and he isn't watching?" Coach Wooden replied, "He will always be watching." People desire validation and encouragement. It's human nature.

Positive reinforcement of the successes people experience as they champion change continually validates the changes they make, so point to the good things about the change and point to the people who made them happen.

DAILY REVIEW YOUR PROGRESS

This last step in the PLAN AHEAD process is vital for two reasons. First, it prompts you to make sure you are on track and moving forward. Second, it reminds you to keep communicating the message of change to your people. That’s always a challenge because until the change becomes part of the organization’s or team’s culture, people lose sight of it and go back to their old way of doing things.

Winston Churchill quipped, “To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed often.”¹⁷ Certainly we can’t achieve perfection, but we can try to get as close as we can, and that means changing daily. As you work to keep the change message of progress alive with your people:

- Talk about the change clearly.
- Talk about the change creatively.
- Talk about the change continually.

If you do that along with your daily review of progress, the change will be lived, experienced, valued, and shared.

THE FINAL WORD IS CREDIBILITY

In the end, your ability to create positive change will depend on whether the people you lead buy into you as a leader. The Law of Buy-In from *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* states, “People buy into the leader, then the vision.”¹⁸ The foundation of that belief is built through integrity, which we talked about in the previous chapter. Often leaders talk to me

To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed often.

—WINSTON CHURCHILL

about a vision they have for their organization that involves change. They summarize their vision and ask, “Do you think my people will buy into my vision?”

My response is, “Have they bought into you as a leader?” That’s the question that must be answered before a leader tries to implement change. Credibility creates authority, and that comes from everything we’ve talked about up to this point: influence, priorities, and integrity. If your people buy into you, then they will want what you want because they trust you. And they will align with your vision, even if it requires change. That is what enables you to do big things—even turn an organization around like Lou Holtz has.

DEVELOPING THE CHANGE AGENT WITHIN YOU

If you are currently leading a team, department, or organization, there are undoubtedly things you would like to change and improve. Use this chapter’s application guide to help you plan the process.

HOW MUCH “CHANGE” DO YOU HAVE AS A LEADER?

Before you start the process of planning changes, take some time to figure out where you stand with your people. What is your current level of leadership credibility? How much “change” do you have in your pocket? Have you earned the credibility to make the change you desire? If you have a difficult time making that judgment, ask the advice of a colleague whose leadership discernment you respect.

START TO PLAN AHEAD TODAY

Use the plan described in this chapter to prepare for the change you desire to make. Describe what you will need to do at each stage. Then follow the plan as you roll out the change.

Predetermine the change that is needed.

Describe in detail the change needed and why it is necessary.

Lay out your steps.

Write all the steps that will be needed to complete the change. Start by stating where you are now, and outline the logical process, step-by-step, needed to get to your ending point. This may take you a significant amount of time.

Adjust your priorities.

What priorities must be changed to align the organization and people to the coming change?

Notify key people.

Who are the key people you must talk to first? Write two lists: the influencers and the implementers.

Allow time for acceptance.

This will be hard to gauge in advance. Plan time for people to process the issues, and then use your eyes, ears, and intuition to judge when people have had enough time to get on board.

Head into action.

Describe what the first steps will look like and how they will impact the team or organization.

Expect problems.

Describe the most likely problems you will face as the change is implemented.

Always point to the successes.

Begin planning ways to give recognition and celebrate milestones as the change occurs.

Daily review your progress.

Describe the method you will use to review the progress of the change. What metrics will you use? Which people will you talk to regularly to assess morale? What specific information will signal that the change has been successfully completed?

LEADER SHIFT

THE 11 ESSENTIAL CHANGES
EVERY LEADER MUST EMBRACE

JOHN C.
MAXWELL



HARPERCOLLINS
LEADERSHIP

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CHAPTER 5

PLEASING PEOPLE TO CHALLENGING PEOPLE

The Relational Shift

You cannot lead people if you need people.

Pleasing people is not the same as leading people. That was one of the first important lessons I had to learn in leadership. It defined a new reality for me, and it was very difficult for me to learn. Early in my life I realized that most people liked me. My relational connections with others were strong. My teachers liked me. Kids wanted to hang out with me and be around me in the classroom and on the playground. Intuitively, I knew what mattered to people and was able to please them. So naturally, I worked hard at developing my people-pleasing skills. I felt like my leadership mojo was making everyone happy. And doing it made *me* happy.

During those early years, I might have defined leadership as, “Make people happy and they will follow you.” I was continually asking myself

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one question: “Is everybody happy?” But if you’re a leader, the answer is no. You can never make *everyone* happy. And wanting to do so is a setup for disappointment or failure.

WHO NEEDS A WAKE-UP CALL?

I started my professional leadership career at the age of twenty-two. As already mentioned, I was the leader of a small congregation in Indiana. For the first six months, I felt that everybody was happy. The people there liked me, and I liked them. It was all Kum ba ya.

Then one day I created trouble in paradise. There was an ugly painting in the small lobby of the church. I had noticed it before and thought about how it needed to go, but it hadn’t been a priority. I didn’t say anything about it to anyone, but I got around to removing it. I considered it a small improvement that I was glad to make.

The reaction was immediate and negative. You’d have thought that I called somebody’s baby ugly. Right away I learned that two members of the congregation had given that painting as a gift to the church and had placed it in a prominent spot themselves. When they learned that I had removed it, to say they were not happy is a gross understatement.

I quickly apologized and put the painting back. Whew! That was close. I had dodged the bullet and gone from bad leader to good leader because everyone was happy again.

But a few weeks later, I faced another problem. The youth of our church were playing in a basketball game, and I had promised to attend. But then a member of the church called me with an emergency situation, and I missed the game. The coach of our team and a few of the parents were not happy about it. Uh-oh. I needed do something. So I explained the situation, and the parents got happy again.

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But the coach still wasn't happy.

I went to work pleasing him. I visited him twice to smooth things over. And attended the next two games, even though I hadn't promised to. Finally, I had won him back over to the happy side. Yay. I'd succeeded. But boy was this happy stuff beginning to wear me out. How could I possibly keep up with making everybody happy?

For two years I did everything I could to try to make everyone I led happy. I sincerely believed that if my leadership was good, everybody would like me and everything I did. And if someone—anyone—didn't like me or something I did, then it must mean there was something wrong with my leadership and I needed to fix it. That thinking motivated every action I took and every decision I made.

What a mistake! No leader can please everyone all the time. Even history's greatest leaders had their opponents. But back then, I hadn't yet realized that. When the reality struck me that *everyone* wasn't happy *all* the time, I hit an emotional wall. I believed that I was a bad leader, and I even wondered if I should resign from my position and try to lead somewhere else.

But then I got wise counsel from leaders with more experience. They helped me to understand that it's impossible to please everyone. Then they taught me an even more important insight about myself. I was doing things backward. My goal had been to get people to like me enough so that I could gain the confidence to ask them for commitment. If they declined, I simply worked harder to try to get them to like me more, thinking that would solve the problem. Worse still, I gave the most time and energy to the unhappiest and least-committed people, even though they were not contributing to the vision or helping to move the organization forward. I was letting the tail wag the dog.

I finally realized that I wasn't leading people. I was trying to make them and myself feel good. I wasn't moving the organization forward. I

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was in the friendship business, not the leadership business. I wasn't taking people anywhere or helping them to do better and get better. I was trying to live in Happyville.

To get the best out of people, leaders must ask for the best from people. I wasn't doing that at all. Once I realized this, I wish I could say that I shifted from pleasing people to challenging people quickly and easily, but I can't. The process of change for me was very slow. My desire to be liked by others was deeply rooted within me to the point where my best days in leadership were the ones when people affirmed me. I craved that affirmation every day. But I recognized that affirmation doesn't equal leadership accomplishment, so I vowed to change. Step by step, I talked myself out of the idealistic thoughts and feelings I had as a young leader and coached myself to try to become the leader that the people really needed, not just the one they wanted. I made the leadership shift from pleasing people to challenging them.



TO GET THE BEST OUT OF PEOPLE, LEADERS
MUST ASK FOR THE BEST FROM PEOPLE.

HOW TO SHIFT FROM PLEASER TO LEADER

I don't know whether you have the people-pleasing tendencies I once had. If so, you need to make the same leadership shift I did, because you can never really lead your organization, serve your people, or reach your leadership potential if you're always trying to make others happy. You have to put *doing* what's right for your people and organization ahead of what *feels* right for you. To make that shift, you need to do these seven things:

1. CHANGE YOUR EXPECTATIONS TOWARD LEADERSHIP

The heart of my people-pleasing problem was a desire to do what made me feel good. That included an unwillingness to deal with difficult issues. To fix this I had to change the way I thought about leadership and the way I interacted with others. I had to stop seeking affirmation. I had to stop trying to be everyone's buddy.

One of the people who helped me improve in this area was my mentor, Fred Smith (the consultant, not the founder of FedEx). Once while we were discussing how to handle difficult situations with people, he said, "Always separate what's best for you from what's best for the organization." That statement felt like a smack in the face, because too often I had put myself first. I had always thought about what was best for me. Fred gave me a new perspective and suggested that I think about things in a different order:

1. What's best for the organization?
2. What's best for other people within the organization?
3. What's best for me?

By learning to ask myself these three questions in this order, I was able to clarify my motives for leadership decisions.

I must say that during this relational leadership shift from pleasing people to challenging people, I felt great loneliness as a leader. The affirmation that had been such a wonderful sound to my ears went silent during this season. The people who used to seek me out for consensus avoided me when they were unhappy. Some of the people who used to "toast" me now wanted to "roast" me. But as I stepped back from the crowd, I started to find myself. I discovered that if I *needed* people, I probably couldn't lead them well. That gave me determination to shift from making them happy to helping them get better.

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Eventually I began to desire what was best for the people I led more than what made me feel good about myself. As the pull for approval lessened, I felt released to do the right thing as a leader. I shared the vision, raised the bar, challenged others, showed the way, asked for commitment, and stopped waiting for consensus. The organization was able to take ground, and I was able to help people start reaching their God-given potential. Those who didn't want to go with me, I allowed to go their own way without expending all my energy trying to win them back.

It took time, but I learned to love the new leader I was becoming. No longer did I wait and worry about having everyone on board. The days of allowing unhappy people to manipulate me and steal my joy were over. The first question I asked would no longer be, "Are we all okay?" Instead, I began to consistently ask, "Are we committed?"

One of the greatest lessons I learned in this season was that you never know if people are really with you until you ask them for commitment. When you ask others for commitment, you lose the uncommitted people and you gain the committed ones. When you don't ask for commitment, you keep the uncommitted and lose the committed. You choose who you lose. I also learned that respect is most often earned on difficult ground. People respect leaders who make the hard decisions, who lead by example in tough times instead of just giving orders, who put others first, and who value people enough to ask them to rise up to the greatness that is within them. It's been forty-five years since I made that leadershift, but I still feel how it changed me and my leadership.



YOU NEVER KNOW IF PEOPLE ARE
REALLY WITH YOU UNTIL YOU ASK
THEM FOR COMMITMENT.

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If your leadership is motivated by pleasing others or receiving approval, you need to change your expectations. Shift your focus from what you gain to how you can help people, improve your organization, and achieve your vision. Otherwise, your leadership will always be limited.

2. VALUE PEOPLE AS MUCH AS YOU VALUE YOURSELF

Valuing people is a high priority in my life; every day I intentionally add value to others. For me, this always starts with valuing myself. We see others as we see ourselves, and if we value ourselves, we are able to value others.

Your value assessment of yourself determines your personal investment in others. If you feel that you are worthy of opportunity, you will give others opportunities. If you feel that you are worthy of being developed, you will be willing to develop others. If you see yourself as a 9 (out of 10), you will be more likely to value others highly. If you devalue yourself, you will probably devalue others too. And that's critical because you can't devalue others and be a good leader. Look at how this works:

- Leaders who value their people give them their best effort.
- Leaders who devalue their people give them little effort.
- Leaders who value their people serve them.
- Leaders who devalue their people want to be served by them.
- Leaders who value their people empower them.
- Leaders who devalue their people control them.
- Leaders who value their people motivate them.
- Leaders who devalue their people manipulate them.

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To get the best out of people, you need to *believe* the best about people. Only then will you give them your best—and ask them to give you their best.

3. WORK TO ESTABLISH EXPECTATIONS UP FRONT

In my people-pleasing years, I never established expectations up front. I'd tell myself that sometime, somewhere, somehow, I'd broach the topic of expectations *when the time was right*. But the time was never right, and I never initiated those conversations. Instead, I would work hard to win people over relationally, hoping that they would guess what I wanted from them and that when the tough times came, they would hang with me. But assumptions are never a good method of operation in the leadership world. They always lead to unfulfilled expectations and disappointment.

As a leader, you can either set expectations on the front end and set up the working relationships for success or leave expectations unstated and deal with disappointment on the back end for both you and the people you're leading.

Today, I see the sharing and setting of expectations on the front end as the litmus test for a leader. I go out of my way to be up-front with people.

- Up-front *appreciation* places value on the person and increases the value of our time together.
- Up-front *expectations* increase the value of any meeting. (The sooner I set expectations, the quicker and easier the meeting.)
- Up-front *questions* are the quickest way for people to understand one another and increase the value of our time together.

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- Up-front *discussion* influences the way and direction we lead others.
- Up-front *decisions* increase the value of our time together.

Being up-front means you're out in front.

When I'm preparing to have an up-front conversation with someone, I work to level-set the interaction with one question and seven statements. First, the question:

What Are Your Expectations for Our Interaction?

When I have a conversation with someone, I always invite the other person to go first. It's not only polite but it's smart. Asking a good question without a slanted preamble is good because you can find out what the other person is really thinking, and that's more important than what I want them to think. In addition, if I listen first, the odds increase for the other person to listen to me, because he or she has already been heard.

When I start a professional relationship with someone, the most important thing to establish up-front is our expectations for each other. What does the other person expect of me? What do I expect of him or her? That way we can find out if our desires are compatible. We may need to adjust our expectations to bring them into alignment so that we can both sign off on them. And if I'm the leader in this relationship, the better I know the person, the better I'll know how to lead them.

Once I've learned the other person's expectations up front by asking questions, I set expectations for the other person by communicating these statements:

It's Not About Me—It's Not About You— It's About the Big Picture

A mature person has the ability to see and respect different perspectives. However, when you're leading a team, department, or organization, you

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must always keep your eye on the big picture. And maybe you're aware of what I call the Law of the Big Picture in my book *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork*: the goal is more important than the role. Each person has a role on a team. Why? To help the team accomplish its goal. To fulfill the bigger picture, no individuals—not any team member and not the leader—can lose sight of the goal and get consumed by themselves.

This statement has power only when I start with the part that says it's not about me. I may be the owner of my companies, but I need to remember that it really isn't about me. I don't need to make every leadership decision. I don't need to have my idea win in every meeting. The organization needs to be successful. And if others know that it's not about me, then they should be willing to accept that it's also not about them. This can be difficult for some people, especially if they are very talented and have star potential. But high talent with low self-awareness requires a lot of maintenance. That's why it's important to get expectations settled up front. The team doesn't play its best when its best player thinks it's all about them.



THE TEAM DOESN'T PLAY ITS BEST WHEN ITS BEST PLAYER THINKS IT'S ALL ABOUT THEM.

You Must Value Other People

All leaders are in the people business. If we want to work well with people, we need to value them and add value to them. And here's the good news: adding value to people is also good for business.

Anyone who works with me needs to value people. That's the core of who I am and it's the core of all my companies. We must be willing

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to serve others, and servant leadership isn't difficult if we value people. When we value people, they feel valued. And we are able to succeed in our mission.

You Are Expected to Keep Growing

How do you grow an organization? Through the growth of its individual members. The future of any organization can be found in the growth of the people who are a part of it, and especially the people who lead it. As the Law of the Lid says, leadership ability determines a person's level of effectiveness.

I am a lifelong learner who is intentional about learning something every day of my life. I'm also attracted to people who grow. My best friends are the ones who are continually developing themselves. Our conversations are stimulated by our growth journey.

I expect anyone who joins my team to be intentional about personal and professional growth. Growing together is even better than growing alone. Teams either grow together or they grow apart. Making a commitment to grow every day and then developing relationships with growing people will keep us on the growth track.

You Must Be Prepared to Change

There is a vast difference between conceding that change is inevitable and believing change is essential. The person who concedes that change is inevitable becomes resigned to it and is reactive, thinking, *Change is going to happen, so what can I do?* The individual who believes change is essential is proactive and thinks, *I will make change happen so that our team can improve.* If growth is expected then change is essential. We cannot grow without changing. The very fact that I do something better today means that I learned and improved something yesterday.



THERE IS A VAST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
CONCEDING THAT CHANGE IS INEVITABLE
AND BELIEVING CHANGE IS ESSENTIAL.

Everyone Has to Earn My Time

There are a lot of things I freely give to everyone in my organizations: vision, belief, resources, support, and leadership. One thing that must always be earned is my time. That is the most limited of my personal resources, so it must be earned before I give it. How does someone do that? By being a productive member on the team. In this, I practice the 80-20 principle. I give 80 percent of my time to the 20 percent of the team that produces 80 percent of the results.

Earlier in my career I spent a lot of time with unproductive people, thinking I could change them. I was so naïve. As I mentioned, at first I just wanted to win everyone over. Later, I started to think about people's potential, and I would ask: *Will they do it? Can they do it? Is it worth the effort to ask them?*



Today I'm very pragmatic, and I don't ask those questions, because they are too subjective and rely too much on speculation. Now I ask myself just one question: *Are they productive?*

I place this same standard on myself. Just because I enjoy a friendship with someone doesn't mean I get a pass on productivity. For example, for several years Tom and Todd Mullins included me on the teaching team of Christ Fellowship Church. Tom is founding pastor and Todd, his son,

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is the lead pastor. Both are good friends, and I have loved every minute of my time teaching. However, every year I ask them this question: “Do you want me on the team again this year, or do you want to make a change?” They know I am always ready to step down for the sake of the team. If I can’t be productive for them, it’s time for me to go.

If you work for someone, value that person’s time and be aware that you need to earn it. If others work for you, give your own time only to those who are productive and who are willing to learn, grow, and keep earning it.

Always Take Responsibility

Most people want empowerment when what they need first are responsibility and accountability. As Kevin Turner, who is vice chairman of the board of managers of Albertsons and senior advisor to the company’s chairman and CEO, said, “People want to be judged by their intentions not by their actions.” But results are what make a difference, not good intentions. And results come only when people take responsibility for themselves.

I like what business executive Seth Godin said about this:

Employees wait to be picked for promotion, or to lead a meeting or to speak up at a meeting.

“Pick me, pick me” acknowledges the power of the system and passes responsibility to someone to initiate. Even better, “pick me, pick me” moves the blame from you to them.

If you don’t get picked, it’s their fault, not yours.

If you do get picked, well, they said you were good, right? Not your fault anymore.

Reject the tyranny of picked. Pick yourself.¹

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That's what taking responsibility is. It's picking yourself. It's motivating yourself. It's bringing intentionality and energy to everything you do.

Speaking of energy, that's an area where I especially expect people to take responsibility because, sadly, the lowest energy level often brings down the team. People with negative energy and attitudes can take the team lower faster than people with positive energy can take it up. This is especially true in meetings. How does a leader deal with this problem?

I start by having energy check-ins at the beginning of meetings. I simply ask each person in the room what their energy level number is as I start a meeting. This motivates everyone to be fully present in the room. If needed, I put everyone's name and number on the board, and then I let them know what level of energy is needed from everyone in the room for us to be successful in the meeting. People usually take responsibility to raise their energy to the level of expectations, and it helps the meeting to have high energy and positive results.

We Will Not Avoid Tough Conversations

Leadership demands that we tackle the problems. That includes tough conversations. And their difficulty increases when the issue is not easy and it involves people on our team. But we should never delay tough conversations. The more you wait, the more difficult they become. Why?

- Silence to most people means approval.
- When people have to fill in the blanks themselves, they do so negatively.
- Problems left unaddressed have a snowball effect: they become larger and gain momentum.
- Problems left unaddressed cause inner erosion: we lose respect for ourselves internally.

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- The Law of Diminishing Intent is in effect: The longer you wait to do something you should do now, the greater the odds that you will never do it. One of these days becomes none of these days.

Back in the days when I directly supervised a lot of staff, I used to tell them, “Never worry about how you are doing. I will let you know immediately if there’s a problem.” I don’t sit on issues. If I need to have a tough conversation, I have it as soon as humanly possible.

You’ve probably heard the saying that all’s well that ends well. I also believe that all’s well that begins well. That’s what establishing up-front expectations does for you as a leader. It helps you begin well so that you can challenge people to become their best.

4. ASK YOURSELF THE HARD QUESTIONS BEFORE ANY POTENTIALLY DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

As I grew in my leadership from pleasing people to challenging people, I had to work hard at becoming better at difficult conversations. One of the questions I began asking myself was, *What is the source of the problem prompting the need for this challenging conversation? Is it an external issue, is it a problem within the other person, or is it me?* If the issue was external, like poor communication, a bad system, or an external problem, it would be easy to solve. If it was a problem related to the person’s attitude or actions, it would be more difficult. If the fault was mine, then I might not need to meet with the other person at all. I just needed to own up to it and fix myself! If it was any combination of the three, then the conversation would be very difficult because of the complexity.

As you think about any difficult conversation you are getting ready

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to have, I want to give you some help. Here is a checklist I've used *before* having difficult conversations to help me prepare:

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:	YES	NO
Have I invested in the relationship enough to be candid with them?		
Do I demonstrate that I value them as individuals?		
Am I sure this is their issue and not mine?		
Am I sure I'm not speaking up because I feel threatened?		
Is the issue more important than the relationship?		
Does this conversation clearly serve their interests and not just mine?		
Am I willing to invest time and energy to help them change?		
Am I willing to show them how to do something and not just say what's wrong?		
Am I willing and able to set clear, specific expectations?		
Have I previously addressed the issue or problem in a less formal setting?		
Total:		

Take a look at the tally of *yes* or *no* responses. If you have one or more *no* responses to any of these questions, consider what steps you need

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to take to make that *no* become a *yes* before you conduct that crucial conversation.

5. WHEN A TOUGH CONVERSATION IS NEEDED, DO IT RIGHT

Because it was once so difficult for me, I want to give you some advice about how to make a tough conversation less tough. First, remember why you are having the conversation. It's because you care about the other person; you care enough to confront them. Your goal is to help that person.

Having the right attitude is essential because your actions often carry more weight than your words, and a negative attitude can cause more damage. People remember how they felt long after they have forgotten what you said. You can communicate the right attitude by seeking to understand. Here is a road map for the conversation:

- State the issue clearly at the beginning. Use the phrase, "Are you aware that. . . ?"
- Ask them to tell you their perspective. Start with the phrase, "I need you to help me understand your situation."
- Ask questions. Say, "Am I hearing you correctly?"
- Repeat back what you heard.
- Allow them to respond.
- Try to find common ground.
- Arrive at an agreement on what's best for both of you.
- If you cannot come to an agreement on the issue and solution, agree to meet again.
- See the growth opportunity that lies within the tough conversation.
- Seek to maintain a positive relationship.



HAVING THE RIGHT ATTITUDE IS ESSENTIAL
BECAUSE YOUR ACTIONS OFTEN CARRY
MORE WEIGHT THAN YOUR WORDS.

Following this pattern and arriving at a positive outcome is not always possible, but it's worth trying to attain. You're always better off having the tough conversation and finding out where you stand rather than avoiding it and hoping the problem will resolve itself, because it never does.

6. UNDERSTAND THE 25-50-25 PRINCIPLE

Good leadership always challenges people to rise to the occasion, become their best, and achieve more. Some people accept the challenge and help the team to win. Others don't. As a leader, you have to manage the process that people go through. You can use the 25-50-25 principle to help you. I learned about it years ago when I attended a leadership roundtable in Los Angeles.

Here's how it goes: Whenever you cast vision and challenge people to become part of achieving an endeavor, they tend to fall into one of three groups. Typically, 25 percent of the people will support your efforts, 50 percent will be undecided, and 25 percent will resist change. Your job is to help the middle 50 percent join the first 25 percent. Here are tips for doing that and working with all three groups:

- Understand that the resistant bottom 25 percent are not going to join you, no matter what you do. The greatest leader in the world could be leading them, and they would still resist change. Accept that.

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- Don't waste your effort trying to make this bottom 25 percent happy. They are not going to get happy. Trying to placate them will only encourage their resistance.
- Don't give the bottom 25 percent a platform or credibility. If you believe you're doing the right thing, why would you help them undermine that?
- Try to keep the bottom 25 percent away from the 50 percent who have not yet made up their minds. As baseball manager Casey Stengel said, "The secret of managing is to keep the guys who hate your guts away from the guys who haven't made up their minds yet."
- Ask the 25 percent who support you to help positively influence the middle 50 percent who are undecided.
- Give the supportive 25 percent credibility and a platform to speak. They will help you help the organization move forward.

Any movement you can create in the middle 50 percent toward your leadership and the vision is a win because it takes the organization in the right direction. Celebrate that and keep moving forward.

7. BALANCE CARE WITH CANDOR

I want to give you one more piece of advice related to challenging people, and it's an important one. As a leader, you need to bring both caring and candor into the relationship. I'll explain why that's so important in a moment. But first, let me set it up for you by explaining one of the core teachings I use to develop leaders. It's called the 5 Levels of Leadership. It illustrates a process whereby people can develop influence with others. Here is a brief description of each of the five levels:

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1. **POSITION** (based on rights), where people follow you because they have to.
2. **PERMISSION** (based on relationships), where people follow you because they want to.
3. **PRODUCTION** (based on results), where people follow you because you help improve the team.
4. **PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT** (based on reproduction), where people follow you because you improve them personally.
5. **PINNACLE** (based on respect), where people follow you because you help them become leaders at Level 4 themselves.²

In the forty years I've used the 5 Levels of Leadership to train and develop leaders, I've observed that the most difficult step for most leaders to take is from Level 2 to Level 3. Almost any likable person can develop relationships with people on Level 2, caring about them and connecting with them. But Level 3 is about production. Making the transition from getting people to like you to getting people to produce better results can be daunting. And reproducing yourself on Level 4 by investing in another person and helping him or her become a good leader is even more difficult.

How does a leader move others from "I like being on the team," to "I need to produce for the team"? The answer is to balance care and candor. I mention this because most people naturally default to one or the other. But here's why it's important for you to practice both:

- Care without candor creates dysfunctional relationships.
- Candor without care creates distant relationships.
- Care balanced with candor creates developing relationships.

Care and candor are like the two wings of a plane; you can't fly with only one. They must work together.

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CARE

Values the Person
Establishes the Relationship
Shores Up Weaknesses
Offers Comfort
Makes the Team Pleasant

CANDOR

Values the Person's Potential
Expands the Relationship
Brings Out Strengths
Offers a Challenge
Makes the Team Productive

Caring should never suppress candor, while candor should never displace caring. When I have the responsibility for leading people, I must care for them, but I must also challenge them by initiating honest conversations to help them improve. My mind-set should be, "I love you too much to let you stay where you are." That thinking was difficult for me when I was a young leader. Caring was easy; candor was difficult. Today I'm able to sit down with people and have honest, tough conversations with them. But the principle that guides me is a saying I adopted long ago: people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. That helps me to keep the right balance of care and candor.

It's been almost fifty years since I made the leadership shift from pleasing people to challenging them. It's been one of the most difficult changes I've had to make in my leadership, but it has also been one of the most rewarding. If I hadn't been willing to face up to the need to change, I'd have gotten stuck in my leadership.

I don't know how much difficulty people pleasing has given you. Maybe it's not an issue at all. I hope that's the case. But no matter what, you need to learn how to positively challenge people if you desire to become the best leader you can be. If you can help people to positively reach their potential, you help them, your team, and yourself.



CHAPTER 10

POSITIONAL AUTHORITY
TO MORAL AUTHORITY
The Influence Shift

*The true measure of leadership is
influence—nothing more, nothing less.*

—THE LAW OF INFLUENCE

I've been known for my definition of leadership for more than forty-five years: leadership is influence. If you've led people for any length of time, you probably know instinctively that this is true. But have you ever wondered where the influence comes from?

NO AUTHORITY

I found myself asking that question in my first leadership job. Just a few weeks out of college, I became the pastor of a small rural church in the

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farming community of Hillham, Indiana. The word *community* almost makes it sound bigger than it really was: eleven houses, two gas stations, and a little country store.

It was a job I thought I could handle in an environment where I could learn the ropes. The church wasn't big, it wasn't in a city, and there were no titans of industry to deal with. I would be a medium fish in a small pond. The bylaws of the organization said that I was the leader of the congregation and the chairman of the organization's board. I thought that made me a leader.

The first time I met with the board, I prepared for it. I thought about the vision and how I would articulate it. I thought about how I wanted the meeting to go, and I wrote a detailed agenda.

I knew that, as the chairman, I was supposed to open the meeting and run it. So after the introductions and greetings were finished and we were sitting around the table, I prepared to start. But before I could say or do anything, Claude, one of the board members, said, "Pastor, why don't you open us in prayer?"

That's a good idea, I thought, so I prayed.

I opened up the file folder with copies of my agenda in it and was about to hand them out, when Claude said, "There are a couple of things I think we ought to talk about tonight."

Oh, I thought, *okay*. *We can take care of those things first. Then we can get to my agenda.*

Claude led the discussion and asked questions while the other men responded. I listened and tried to follow along. Most of the things they were dealing with were the kind of mundane, everyday items that need to be done in an organization, so there was nothing earth-shattering.

After about an hour, Claude said, "Well, that about does it. Pastor, why don't you close us in prayer?"

So I said a prayer, everybody got up, shook hands, said their good-byes, and went home. And I thought to myself, *What just happened?*

WHERE DOES AUTHORITY COME FROM?

That's the day I learned that a leadership position does not give someone leadership authority. And having a title is not the same as having influence. I had the title, but everyone followed Claude. His opinion was the one that mattered at the table. Everyone agreed with everything he said. And they were glad to do what he said.



A LEADERSHIP POSITION DOES NOT GIVE SOMEONE LEADERSHIP AUTHORITY.

Back then, I had not yet discovered my definition of leadership, but after that board meeting, I began thinking about the topic. And I started trying to figure out why all the board members followed Claude. He was a middle-aged farmer who also worked at the nearby power plant. He wasn't an especially impressive man. He wasn't educated. But he had influence.

I look back now, and I realize that in the small world of Hillham, Claude had a degree of moral authority. To the people in that church and on that board, his words carried great weight. Why? Because of the way he lived his life. He was a good man. He was honest, fair, and hardworking. His word and actions lined up, and that had been true for decades. He cared for the congregation and was always ready to help. Claude would not

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have recognized himself as a leader or called himself a leader, yet he had earned the right to be followed.

When it comes to leadership, I think there are all kinds of authority. Here are some examples:

- **NATURAL AUTHORITY:** Some people naturally lead better than others and therefore step into leadership roles.
- **POSITIONAL AUTHORITY:** This kind of authority comes with a title or a formal position in an organization and is the lowest level of leadership.
- **KNOWLEDGE AUTHORITY:** Knowing more than others do or having specific information can give people an influence edge.
- **SITUATIONAL AUTHORITY:** A certain circumstance can arise that requires the most qualified person to lead in that situation.
- **RELATIONAL AUTHORITY:** When people have built relationships with others, that gives them influence to lead.
- **PROXIMITY AUTHORITY:** When individuals are close to the real leader or authority figure, they can borrow from that leader's influence to lead others.
- **SUCCESS AUTHORITY:** Success gives people credibility, and others want to be on their team to be part of their success.
- **MENTORING AUTHORITY:** Developers of other people increase their influence with the people they mentor and gain a reputation for credibility.
- **SENIORITY AUTHORITY:** In some cultures, being an elder or having seniority in an organization gives authority.

My experience with Claude started me on a journey toward understanding different kinds of leadership authority. It helped me settle my definition of leadership. It prompted me to develop the 5 Levels of

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Leadership, which I mentioned in chapter 5 on the leadership shift from pleasing people to challenging people. And it ultimately led me to the concept of moral authority, which is the highest level of influence. For fifty years I have been in the process of the influence shift, from positional authority to moral authority. It's a journey I'm still on, and a shift I'm still working to make.

What is moral authority? It can be difficult to define. On his blog, Theodore Brown acknowledges that the term is used a lot, but he also states how difficult *moral authority* is to define. One example he gives is what he calls the John McCain effect, which he says is “the capacity to convince others of how the world *should* be.”¹

Here's another perspective from Harvard Business School professor Kevin Sharer. He wrote:

Moral authority is not easy to define precisely, but like many things, you know it when you see it, or especially when you do not. Lack of moral authority in leaders breeds distrust, creates cynicism and kills initiative throughout the organization. Over time, the lack of strong moral authority in the leadership is fatal to the enterprise or country.²

These perspectives make moral authority sound grandiose. It can be, but it doesn't have to be. Claude had moral authority and didn't even know it. But so did Nelson Mandela and Mother Teresa. So what is moral authority? Here's my definition:

Moral authority is the recognition of a person's leadership influence based on who they are more than the position they hold. It is attained by authentic living that has built trust and it is sustained by successful leadership endeavors. It is earned by a lifetime of consistency. Leaders

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can strive to earn moral authority by the way they live, but only others can grant them moral authority.

Moral authority is truly the highest level of leadership influence, and many people recognize it. It comes from possessing good values. It adds value to others. It inspires people. It helps the leader to make the right decisions for the right reasons. It marks a life of words and actions that line up. We know when we're in the presence of someone who has moral authority, and we want to follow them!

In "4 Ways to Build Moral Authority," Chuck Olson said,

People follow people, not positions. Your business card may say you're a leader and in-charge, but if your bank account of moral authority is overdrawn, you will be forced to rely on extrinsic factors to rally your followers. No amount of skill, wealth, personality, education, or accomplishment can compensate for the absence of moral authority. Perks and paychecks are the currency required to enlist people in a project, but moral authority is the currency required to enlist people in a movement. Andy Stanley in his book, *Next Generation Leader*, observes: "Your position will prompt people in your organization to lend you their hands. . . . But your moral authority will inspire them to lend you their hearts."³

Moral authority has the implicit power to transform what is into what can be. It takes people to higher levels of living and leading. It's inspirational, yet at the same time it is grounded and credible. It makes leaders better because they desire to do better. Moral authority brings out the best in teams because of the respect team members have for the leaders and the desire team members have to live up to and follow their example.

THE PATHWAY TO MORAL AUTHORITY

One of the dangers when anyone begins discussing moral authority is that it can sound mystical and out of reach. However, it is grounded in four things: competence, courage, consistency, and character. I believe anyone can pursue moral authority and develop greater influence by developing in all four of these areas. Let's take a look at each of them.

1. COMPETENCE—THE ABILITY TO LEAD WELL

Everything starts here. Competence is the core of moral authority. If you can't do your job, if you can't deliver the goods, if you can't lead the team well, why would anyone want to follow you? You can't cultivate moral authority unless people respect you. Author George L. Davis observed, "Authority is not something we buy, are born with, or even have delegated to us by our superiors. It is something we earn—and we earn it from our subordinates. No manager has any real authority over his people until he has proved himself worthy of it—in the eyes of his people—not his own, nor those of his superiors."⁴



COMPETENCE IS THE CORE OF MORAL AUTHORITY.

How do you build a foundation of competence? By giving your best, starting with the small stuff. Dale Carnegie said, "Don't be afraid to give your best to what seemingly are small jobs. Every time you conquer one

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it makes you that much stronger. If you do the little jobs well, the big ones tend to take care of themselves.”

Doing work with excellence to full completion helps a person develop a reputation for competence. Oscar Hammerstein II was one of the great lyricists of the American theater. He wrote songs for shows such as *The Sound of Music*, *The King and I*, *Oklahoma*, and *South Pacific*. His advice to writers and artists is equally valuable for business people and leaders:

This is a very important thing for writers to remember. You never know when you will be found out if your work is careless. A year or so ago, on the cover of the New York *Herald Tribune* Sunday Magazine, I saw a picture of the Statue of Liberty. It was a picture taken from a helicopter and it showed the top of the statue’s head. I was amazed at the detail there. The sculptor had done a painstaking job with the lady’s coiffure, and yet he must have been pretty sure that the only eyes that would ever see this detail would be the uncritical eyes of sea gulls. He could not have dreamt that any man would ever fly over this head and take a picture of it. He was artist enough, however, to finish off this part of the statue with as much care as he had devoted to her face and her arms and the torch and everything that people can see as they sail up the bay. He was right. When you are creating a work of art, or any other kind of work, finish the job off perfectly.⁵

Doing your work with devotion to excellence and the will to follow through will give you a positive reputation for competence. That’s true in any profession. But leaders need to also cultivate influence with others and demonstrate competence in their ability to engage with people and motivate and inspire them to work together. Forty years ago, I started teaching the 5 Levels of Leadership to help people understand how influence worked and to teach them a growth process they could

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follow to become better leaders. I write about this more fully in my book *Developing the Leader Within You 2.0*, but I want to summarize it here to help you get a feel for how you can develop your leadership competence.

Level 1: Position—People Follow Because They Have To

The authority someone receives at this level is very limited and is restricted to the leader's job description. A leader need not be competent to receive a leadership appointment. In some organizations, that person doesn't even have to be competent to *retain* a leadership position.

Level 2: Permission—People Follow Because They Want To

A leader begins to develop authority at this second level. When the leader builds relationships, people are willing to work with them because they like them and enjoy spending time with them. They are beginning to give permission for the person to lead them.

Level 3: Production—People Follow Because You Demonstrate Competence

On this third level a leader begins to demonstrate genuine competence. Being productive is a big step in gaining moral authority with others. People follow because the leader has produced results and is successful, and they want to be on a winning team.

Level 4: People Development—People Follow Because You Help Them Become Competent

When you start to invest in people and help them to become successful personally, your level of authority rises dramatically, the lives of the people you help improve, and this gives you a level of credibility you can gain no other way.

***Level 5: Pinnacle—People Follow Because
You Have a Reputation for Excellence***

When you live a life of competence, influence people at each of the first four levels, and develop leaders over a long period of time, you can approach the pinnacle of leadership. This is where true moral authority is established.

Moral authority is not based on position, but you must learn the skills of each level of leadership and master them to be seen as highly competent in leadership. However, competence alone is not enough to earn moral authority.

2. COURAGE—MOVING FORWARD IN THE FACE OF FEAR

Leadership authority shrinks or expands with a person's courage. Author and professor C. S. Lewis said, "Courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point." Without courage, you can't live any other virtue consistently. With courage, especially when facing great obstacles, you begin to gain moral authority.

I think everyone admires courage, and intuitively we understand that it carries weight. We can follow a leader who is courageous. More specifically, here's how courage relates to moral authority:

***Courage Encourages People During
Difficult and Uncertain Times***

There is perhaps no greater need for courage from a leader than during difficult times. Poet Ralph Waldo Emerson is rumored to have said:

Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you [that] you are wrong. There

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are always difficulties arising, which tempt you to believe that your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to the end, requires some of the same courage which a soldier needs. Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men [and women] to win them.

The courage that people need to see and feel during difficult times does not have to be loud and dramatic, though many times it is. The difficulties of our everyday lives often require us to find and display courage. Author and artist Mary Anne Radmacher said, “Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, ‘I will try again tomorrow.’”



COURAGE DOESN'T ALWAYS ROAR.
SOMETIMES COURAGE IS THE QUIET
VOICE AT THE END OF THE DAY SAYING,
“I WILL TRY AGAIN TOMORROW.”

—MARY ANNE RADMACHER

Courage Enables People to Maximize Their Potential

In *Making the Courage Connection*, Doug Hall wrote, “Courage has a tangible quality. You can’t touch it, but you can feel it. It feels like positive acceleration. Courage sends a rush of energy through your body. It makes you wake up in the morning with a feeling of wanting to wrap your hands around the day.”⁶ Being courageous not only fires you up but also fires up others and makes them more courageous. That’s important, because nobody ever reached his or her potential by cowering in fear. Fortune favors the bold.

One of my favorite stories of courage is about David of Israel before

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he became king. Most people are aware that David fought Goliath with a sling and defeated him. But many people know little more than that about the story. When David stepped out to battle Goliath, the rest of Israel's army, including King Saul and David's older brothers, were cowering in fear. None of them had the courage to face Goliath, who had challenged their army and taunted them daily, waiting for a champion to meet him. David, a boy with no military experience, had the courage to fight the Philistine giant, took him down with a stone, and then cut off his head with the warrior's own sword. In that moment, the entire army of Israel found their courage because of David's heroic act. They attacked and routed the Philistine army.

Time after time, before he was king and during his reign, David's courage inspired his people to do their best. His closest allies were men who also became great warriors because they were inspired by his courage. Under David's leadership, the nation expanded its borders, conquered its enemies, and achieved peace.

Courage Helps Leaders Find Their Voice

As leaders display courage in crisis, they often find their voices. During World War II, when England stood alone against Nazi Germany, Winston Churchill found his voice. In 1940 while addressing Parliament, he told his countrymen, "We shall never surrender." Martin Luther King Jr. found his voice during the civil rights struggle of the 1960s. His words still resound today: "Our lives begin to end the day we remain silent about things that matter."

A remarkable story of a leader who found his voice is told in *Profiles in Courage* by John F. Kennedy. When Andrew Johnson became president following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, Johnson was determined to carry out Lincoln's policies regarding the South. It was Lincoln's desire to bring healing quickly to the nation after the Civil

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War, and Johnson, who was from Tennessee, recognized Lincoln's policy as the best course of action.

Johnson's fellow Republicans in Congress desired a different path. They wanted to punish the Southern states for seceding, and when Johnson resisted their policies and vetoed much of the legislation they passed, the most radical wing of the Republican party became determined to impeach Johnson and remove him from office.

All the Democrats in the Senate opposed impeachment, as did six Republicans. If all the remaining Republicans voted in favor, then Johnson would be removed from office. But one senator from Kansas, Edmund G. Ross, who was believed to be a supporter of the radicals, would not vote to impeach the president because he believed it would signal the end of the divided powers of government and permanently damage the country, turning the United States into "a partisan Congressional autocracy."⁷

Ross later commented, "I almost literally looked down into my open grave. Friendships, positions, fortune, everything that makes life desirable to an ambitious man were about to be swept away by the breath of my mouth, perhaps forever."⁸ When asked how he voted, he answered, "Not guilty," and Johnson was not impeached. Shortly after the trial, he said to his wife, "Millions of men cursing me today will bless me tomorrow for having saved the country from the greatest peril through which it has ever passed, though none but God can ever know the struggle it has cost me."⁹ And it did cost him. At the next election, he was voted out of office. When he returned home after his term, he was ostracized and attacked and lived in near poverty.¹⁰

Every leader who possesses moral authority has had to stand alone at some point in time. Such moments make leaders. Such stands are often very difficult, but when leaders look back afterward, they often see those as their proudest moments.



EVERY LEADER WHO POSSESSES MORAL
AUTHORITY HAS HAD TO STAND
ALONE AT SOME POINT IN TIME.
SUCH MOMENTS MAKE LEADERS.

We don't choose the times or the circumstances we must face in life, but we do choose our responses. I love the prayer of the Special Olympics because I think it represents the mind-set we should embrace as leaders: "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

3. CONSISTENCY—DOING WELL ALL THE TIME, NOT JUST SOMETIMES

In his fantastic book *Visioneering*, Andy Stanley described the value of consistency related to moral authority. He wrote:

It is the alignment between a person's convictions and his behavior that makes his life persuasive. Herein is the key to sustained influence.

The phrase that best captures this dynamic is moral authority. To gain and maintain your influence you must have moral authority. Moral authority is the critical, non-negotiable, can't-be-without ingredient of sustained influence. Without moral authority, your influence will be limited and short-lived.

Moral authority is the credibility you earn by walking your talk . . . It is the relationship other people see between what you say and what you do, between what you claim to be and what you are. A person with moral authority is beyond reproach. That is, when you look for a discrepancy between what he says he believes and what he

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does, you come up empty. There is alignment between conviction and action, belief and behavior.

Nothing compensates for a lack of moral authority. No amount of communication skills, wealth, accomplishment, education, talent, or position can make up for a lack of moral authority. We all know plenty of people who have those qualities but who exercise no influence over us whatsoever. Why? Because there is a contradiction between what they claim to be and what we perceive them to be.¹¹

What Stanley described is internal consistency between values and actions, which is essential to a leader's success if he or she desires to gain moral authority. Equally important is the ability to be consistent over time.

Now that I'm in my seventies, people have started to ask me questions that prompt me to think back on my life. Probably the most common question is, "John, now that you're in your seventies, what has been your greatest surprise in life?" I think of these as "old man questions" because nobody asks them of young leaders. They make me chuckle, because they mean that I look much older than I feel, but I attempt to answer them honestly.

There are two things that surprise me. The first is how fast time has gone by. I still can't believe I'm over seventy. The second is the value of consistency. Consistency compounds in a way I never realized. If you do the right things when you're young, it mostly goes unnoticed and unrecognized. But if you do the right things and lead well over decades, it becomes recognized, and you get more credit than you feel you deserve. That's the power of what I call layered living. If you embrace layered learning (as I described in chapter 3 on shifting from goals to growth) and you practice layered leadership (by consistently living out your values and performing with excellence), then your reward can be layered living, where you reap the benefits of moral authority.

LEADERSHIP

Consistency is so valuable to a leader that it's difficult to list all its benefits. Here are just a few:

- **CONSISTENCY ESTABLISHES YOUR REPUTATION.** Nearly anyone can be good once. Being good continually is difficult. However, continued repetition leads to a positive reputation.
- **CONSISTENCY MAKES TEAM MEMBERS MORE SECURE.** Perhaps the greatest compliment a person can receive is, "I can depend on you." A consistent leader inspires team members to become more confident.
- **CONSISTENCY ALLOWS FOR ACCURATE MEASUREMENT OF YOUR GROWTH.** It's difficult to gauge the progress of inconsistent people. The track record we establish shows what we have done and how far we have come.
- **CONSISTENCY MAKES YOU RELEVANT.** People who bounce back and forth between engagement and disengagement always have to play catch-up. By staying consistently engaged, you don't fall behind.
- **CONSISTENCY MODELS YOUR EXPECTATIONS FOR OTHERS.** When you consistently model your values and work ethic, team members know what you expect of them because they've seen it every day. Consistency always reinforces expectations.
- **CONSISTENCY MAINTAINS YOUR MESSAGE.** When a leader communicates a vision but acts in ways that are inconsistent with that vision the result is confusion. It distracts from the message and makes it more difficult for everyone on the team.

Consistency, along with competence and courage, is vital to a leader's ability to develop moral authority, but there's still one more component without which moral authority is impossible to earn.

4. CHARACTER—BEING BIGGER ON THE INSIDE THAN THE OUTSIDE

Moral authority is a result of right intentions, right values, right beliefs, right actions, right relationships, and right responses. There is a lot to do right to develop moral authority. That doesn't mean perfection. We are all human and make mistakes. But to have moral authority, our intentions must be right; the motives of the heart must be good.

While much of leadership is outward and public, the right motives and the good character traits we need to become leaders with moral authority are won in private. These two aspects of leadership, public and private, resemble the two parts of a tree. One part you see: our public leadership is like a tree's trunk and branches. That's the part that bears fruit. However, who leaders are in private is what can't be seen, like a tree's roots. If the roots are shallow, then the tree won't survive. Drought will dry it up. A storm will knock it down. But if the roots are deep, the tree can thrive in almost any circumstance.

What does it mean to develop deep roots as a leader? It means having strong character. What kind of character does a leader need to have? I believe good character demonstrates these four characteristics:

Integrity

I define integrity two ways. First, it's the alignment of your values and actions. You know what's right and you do it. Integrity has consistency,



LEADERS OF INTEGRITY DO THE RIGHT THING, EVEN WHEN IT'S HARD, EVEN WHEN IT'S NOT BEST FOR THEM PERSONALLY.

as I discussed earlier in this chapter, but the consistency is specific to what's right and wrong, not just what's good and best. Leaders with moral authority hold themselves to a high standard of conduct.

The second definition has to do with decision-making. Leaders of integrity do the right thing, even when it's hard, even when it's not best for them personally. They put the team, the organization, and the vision ahead of themselves.

Authenticity

Author and spiritual leader Mark Batterson said, "Authenticity is the new authority in leadership." I agree, because I believe that is an essential part of moral authority. People do not want to follow leaders who pretend to be what they're not. They don't expect perfection—just honesty.

This can be a real struggle for many leaders. They want to meet others' expectations and can be tempted to compromise their beliefs or standards. I felt this pull early in my career as a young pastor. The organization I was a part of held some theological positions that I was personally uncomfortable with. For a couple of years, I felt an obligation to teach on these issues, but I always felt as though I was promoting something I didn't believe in, and it made me miserable.

Then one day, as I was preparing a message that I was struggling with, I resolved to change. I marked my resolve by writing down these three statements:

1. I will only teach what I believe—passion.
2. I will only teach what I experience—confidence.
3. I will only teach what I live—authenticity.

I have followed those guidelines ever since. Those decisions made me not only a better communicator but also a better leader. To be the

best leader you can be, you need to acknowledge who you really are and be willing to let people witness your authenticity.

HUMILITY IS MAKING THE EVERYDAY CHOICE
TO CREDIT GOD FOR YOUR BLESSINGS AND
TO CREDIT OTHERS FOR YOUR SUCCESSES.

Humility

I believe humility is an essential quality for a leader who possesses moral authority. In his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins called this “a compelling modesty.” He wrote:

We were struck by how the good-to-great leaders didn’t talk about themselves. . . . When pressed to talk about themselves, they’d say things like, “I hope I’m not sounding like a big shot. . . .”

It wasn’t just false modesty. Those who worked with or wrote about the good-to-great leaders continually used words like *quiet, humble, modest, reserved, shy, gracious, mild-mannered, self-effacing, understated, did not believe his own clippings*; and so forth.¹²

As a person of faith, I see humility as making the everyday choice to credit God for my blessings and to credit others for my successes. How would you describe it? My friend Rick Warren said, “Humility is not denying your strengths. Humility is being honest about your weaknesses.” No matter how you define *humility*, know that it means three things. First, you possess self-awareness and can criticize yourself. Second, you are confident and comfortable enough that you don’t feel any need to draw attention to yourself. And third, you revel in the accomplishments of others and are eager to help them shine.

Love

The final character quality to embrace as a leader in order to have moral authority is love. You must care about people. You must respect them. You must value them. People can always tell when you don't, and that creates an instant disconnection that short-circuits moral authority.

I've talked a bit about the John Maxwell Team. Our motto is, "People of Value, Who Value People." I want our coaches to have resources and expertise to offer, and I want them to value others so that their character and attitude are right when working with people. They need to love people and care about them enough to help them.

What do you want to do with your leadership? I think every leader wants to make an impact, a difference. It's the reason we get up in the morning. It's why we work with people. It's why we create teams or build organizations. Do you have it in you to do something big? Do you want to change your organization, or your community, or your culture, or your country? How big are your dreams? The bigger they are, the more you need moral authority to accomplish them.

When I was in my early thirties, I started to get the sense that my leadership could be impactful and my life could make a difference. That prompted me to make some personal decisions. At the time, I simply thought they were the right things to do to be a better leader. Today, I can see that they helped me in the four areas I've written about in this chapter: competence, courage, consistency, and character. I decided to:

1. Always put people first.
2. Live to make a difference, not to make money.
3. Be myself, but be my best self possible.
4. Express gratitude—reject entitlement.
5. Be willing to be misunderstood and lonely for the right reasons.

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I've worked hard to follow these guidelines for the last forty years.

In the end, you don't get to grant yourself moral authority. You can choose to strive for it, but only others can give it to you, and they must do so freely. But that should not stop you from doing everything right that you can to earn it. Because if you gain moral authority, it makes you worthy of respect, inspires trust and confidence, and enables you to lead at the highest standards of performance. This leadership will increase your influence, giving you buy-in not only from the people on your team but from others who aren't under your formal leadership. And with that influence, there's no telling what you can help people accomplish.

HOW TO LEAD

WHEN YOUR BOSS
CAN'T
(OR WON'T)

JOHN C.
MAXWELL



HARPERCOLLINS
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CHAPTER 1

WHAT HAPPENS
WHEN BOSSES
DON'T LEAD





I've been studying leadership for over fifty years, and in just about every conference I've taught, someone has come up to me and said something similar to this: "I like what you teach about leadership, but I can't apply it. I'm not the main leader. And the person I work under is a terrible boss."

Is that where you live? Are you working somewhere in the middle of an organization with a boss who can't or won't lead? You don't have any "official" power to make changes, so you feel stuck. You have ideas. You want to make a contribution. You want to make things happen. But the person you work for makes it difficult.

WHEN LEADERS DON'T LEAD

Many people find themselves in this kind of situation. I know I say this so often that some people are tired of hearing it, but I believe it down to the core of my being. *Everything rises and falls on*

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leadership. It really does. If you don't believe it, just put together a group of people without a leader and watch them. They will drift. When there is no good leader directing a team, running a department, leading an organization, or heading a family, then the following results are inevitable.

DECISIONS ARE DELAYED

Not all good decision makers are leaders, but all good leaders are decision makers. Often it takes a leader to make decisions—and if not to make them, then to help others make them more quickly.

AGENDAS ARE MULTIPLIED

When a group of people comes together and no one is clearly the leader, then individuals begin to follow their own agendas. Before long, all the people are doing their own thing. Teams need leadership to provide a unifying voice.

CONFLICTS ARE EXTENDED

One of the most important roles of a leader is conflict resolution. In the absence of clear leadership, conflicts always last longer and inflict more damage. Often it takes a good leader to step up, step in, and bring everyone to the table to work things out. Leaders must always be ready to do what it takes to help people resolve their conflicts.

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MORALE BECOMES LOW

Napoleon said, “Leaders are dealers in hope.” When leaders are not present or not leading, people often lose hope and morale plummets. Why is that? Because morale can be defined as “faith in the leader at the top.”

PRODUCTION IS REDUCED

Strong leaders are creative in finding ways to help others become productive. Sometimes it means laying out a challenge. Sometimes it means giving people training. Sometimes it means encouraging others or putting up incentives. If the same thing worked for every person in every situation, then there would be no need for leaders. Because every person is different and circumstances are constantly changing, it takes a leader to figure out what’s needed and to put that solution into action.

SUCCESS IS DIFFICULT

I believe many people want to dismiss the importance of leadership when it comes to organizational success. They don’t see it—and in some cases they don’t want to see it. Leadership comes into play, even when you don’t want it to. Your organization will not function the same without strong leaders in every department or division. All organizations need leaders at every level in order to be successful.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE VISION?

One of the worst things that happens when bosses don't lead is that the vision of the organization suffers. If a team starts out with a vision but without a competent leader, it is in trouble. Why? Because vision leaks. And without a leader, the vision will dissipate, and the team will drift until it has no sense of direction.

Has your leader neglected to communicate the vision? Or is your leader proposing a vision that doesn't align or contribute to the vision of the organization? If so, I'm sure it's creating problems. What should you do?

If you have any leadership ability, you have ideas about vision. You undoubtedly see possibilities. You want to go somewhere, and you want to take people with you so that you can achieve something together. But how you respond matters. Take a look at the following ways people react to vision. The first three responses are negative. The last three are better, with each of them increasingly positive.

I. ATTACK IT—CRITICIZE AND SABOTAGE THE VISION

Some people set themselves up in opposition to the vision, no matter if the boss is a bad leader or a good one who does a fantastic job of communicating it. That's just a fact. Why?

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They didn't help create the vision. Most people don't like change, and whenever someone begins casting a vision, change is inevitable. People's attitudes toward change are different when they help create it. Participation increases ownership. When you're an owner, you see things differently. You step up. You take better care of whatever it is.

They don't understand the vision. Just because a vision is clear and compelling doesn't mean that everyone really understands it. Different kinds and styles of communication don't connect equally for everybody. If a leader is really wise, she communicates the vision in many ways, in many settings, using many methods.

They don't agree with the vision. Some people react negatively to a vision because they think it's impossible to achieve. Others—though it happens much less often—because they think it's too small. Still others balk because the vision has changed since the time they originally signed on. But more often than not, the real issue has more to do with the leader. If people disagree with the vision, it's often because they have a problem with the person who cast it. No matter how good the vision is, if people don't believe in the leader, they will have problems buying in to the vision.

They don't know the vision. When it comes to results, there is absolutely no difference between

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people not knowing an organization's vision and the organization not having a vision at all. The inevitable result is dissatisfaction and discouragement.

They feel unneeded to achieve the vision. There are three different kinds of attitudes when it comes to enlisting people to help fulfill a vision. The first one says, "We're going to do this with or without you." The second says, "We sure would like you to help us do this." The third says, "We can't do this without you." You can guess which one inspires and motivates people to participate and give their best.

Old-style autocratic leaders may have been able to get away with the first type of attitude, but that doesn't fly with people today, at least not in cultures where people are free to make choices. The second approach sometimes works, but neither is as effective as the third. People who understand how important their part is are motivated to persevere and work with excellence, even in the face of obstacles and problems. People want to feel needed.

They aren't ready for the vision. It may be sad to say, but some people are not ready—emotionally, intellectually, or professionally—to step up, embrace the vision, and help to make it happen. If they are willing but unable, then they can be trained and developed. If they are neither willing nor able, then there may not be much you can do to help them.

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2. IGNORE IT—DO THEIR OWN THING

Some people may not attack the vision, but they don't support it either. Instead, they pretend it doesn't exist and do their own thing. Obviously, this is not helpful to the organization. If your boss isn't leading, don't ignore the vision just because you're frustrated. It will ultimately make you look like you're not a team player.

One leader I spoke to, who for many years worked as a mid-level leader, said that he remembers a time when his boss wanted him to confront an employee on a dress code issue. The problem for this leader was that he didn't agree with the policy. But he believed in the larger vision of the organization and wanted to support his leader, so he followed through with the confrontation. It turned out to be especially difficult because the employee thought the rule was petty. But the mid-level leader firmly supported his leader. The employee never knew that this leader actually agreed with the employee, not with his boss.

3. ABANDON IT—LEAVE THE ORGANIZATION

If the vision violates your principles or doesn't speak to what you value deep down, leaving the organization may be the appropriate action. Sometimes that is the best option—leaving with honor. That way you are neither undermining

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the vision, nor are you endorsing something with which you cannot agree. I must mention one caution. If you find yourself in a situation where you are considering leaving an organization, make sure you're not doing it because of selfishness or ego.

4. ADAPT TO IT—FIND A WAY TO ALIGN WITH THE VISION

At the very least, a good employee finds a way to align himself with the vision of his organization, so this is where you need to start. David Branker told me the story of Bret, a middle manager whose job was to provide computer support and data tracking for an organization's training department. Bret was frustrated because he didn't think the job he was asked to do was contributing significantly to the company's vision.

Instead of sulking or complaining, he approached his leader to talk about the issue. Together, they discovered how his department might add greater value to the organization by creating systems that used technology to make training faster, more efficient, and more cost-effective. By aligning himself with the vision, Bret not only furthered the mission, added value to the organization, and improved the bottom line, but he also found greater personal fulfillment.

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5. CHAMPION IT—TAKE THE VISION AND MAKE IT A REALITY

Vision may begin with one person, but it is accomplished only through the efforts of many people. As long as your leader's vision doesn't contradict the vision of the organization, try working to fulfill it. Strive to take the vision from *me* to *we*. John W. Gardner said, "The prospects never looked brighter and the problems never looked tougher. Anyone who isn't stirred by both of those statements is too tired to be of much use to us in the days ahead."

When leaders in the middle of an organization don't support the vision, they neither champion it nor transfer it to their followers. As a result, the people they lead often don't contribute to the overall success of the organization. You can help to prevent this. If you know and understand the vision of the organization, communicate it. Become a conduit of information to your team to help all of you make a positive contribution to the organization.

6. ADD VALUE TO IT

The most positive response to vision is to go beyond championing it and to actually add value to it. At this point, the vision becomes something more. It has greater value to the leader, greater value

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to the recipients of the vision, and greater value to the person who contributed to it.

Not everyone gets the opportunity to add value to the vision. The prerequisite is championing the vision as it already exists. You can do that even if you work for a boss who doesn't lead well.

If your boss isn't communicating the vision, then become a vision champion for the organization yourself. Communicate it to help create an environment of productivity and success for the people in your area of responsibility. And do your best to keep people with a different vision—especially a destructive one—from rushing in and filling the void created by your leader.

BAD BOSSES

Russian writer Leo Tolstoy began his novel *Anna Karenina* this way: “Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” A similar idea can be expressed about leaders. All good leaders share many characteristics, but bad leaders come in quite a few varieties. Here are a few:

INSECURE LEADERS

Insecure leaders think everything is about them, and as a result, every action, every piece of

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information, every decision is put through their filter of self-centeredness. When someone on their team performs exceptionally well, they fear being outshone, and they often try to keep her from rising up. When someone on their team does poorly, they react in anger because it makes them look bad.

More than anything else, insecure leaders desire the status quo—for everyone but themselves. They are like the company president who is reported to have sent a memo to the personnel manager with the following message: “Search the organization for alert, aggressive young leaders capable of stepping into my shoes. And when you find them—fire them!”

One friend I talked to while writing this book said that he once worked for a leader who had one basic leadership principle: keep everyone off balance. If someone working for him started feeling a little too secure, he would “shake him up.”

In an organization, security flows downward. When leaders are insecure, they often project that insecurity down to the people below them. If you work for an insecure person, not only will you have to work to deflect that individual’s insecurity from yourself, but you will also have to work harder to “break the chain” and create security for the people who work for you. If you don’t, the people under your care will suffer.

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VISIONLESS LEADERS

Leaders who lack vision create two immediate problems for the people who work for them. First, they fail to provide direction or incentive to move forward. Second, they almost always lack passion. They have no fire—and no fuel to keep themselves and their people going. That doesn't create the kind of positive environment that is exciting to work in.

We've already looked at the many ways people respond to vision. If your leader lacks vision, as I said, you may need to communicate the organization's vision to the members of your team and remind them how your team contributes. You can show passion, even if your boss doesn't.

INCOMPETENT LEADERS

Incompetent leaders are ineffective, and they often stay that way. They are trouble, not only for the people they lead, but also for their entire organization. Incompetent leaders are “lids” on the parts of the organization they lead. The Law of the Lid in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* states “Leadership ability determines a person's level of effectiveness.” If you work with an incompetent leader, everyone on the team will have to work harder to make up for his deficiencies. In time, the truth may come out that the team is carrying the boss, and not the other way around.

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SELF-CENTERED LEADERS

Self-centered leaders attempt to advance at the expense of everyone around them. An executive I interviewed said that one of the leaders he worked for earlier in his career was someone who selfishly hoarded all the perks that came with his leadership position. Because he experienced this, now that the executive is a top leader himself, he makes it a point to share the perks of leadership with the people who work for him. That's good advice for anyone in a leadership position anywhere in an organization. Share whatever you have with the people below you, and they will work harder for you.

CHAMELEON LEADERS

President Lyndon Baines Johnson used to tell the story of a young, unemployed schoolteacher who came to the Texas hill country during the Depression in search of a job. When the local school board asked him whether the world was round or flat, the would-be teacher panicked, fearing a trap, and blurted out, "I can teach it both ways!"

That's the chameleon leader's reaction when you try to pin him down. When people follow a chameleon leader, they never know how he will react. As a result, valuable time and energy that everyone could use to get work done is often wasted in trying

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to predict and anticipate the leader's next move and which personality he's wearing that day.

Your best bet is to try to insulate yourself as much as possible from a chameleon boss's mood and personality swings. Focus on getting your job done and fulfilling the organization's vision, not trying to please your boss—because you won't be able to predict what it will take.

POLITICAL LEADERS

Similar to chameleon leaders are political leaders. They can be just as difficult to pin down, but where emotional issues often fuel the chameleon leader's problems, political leaders are motivated by the desire to get ahead. It's hard to follow people whose decisions are based on political ambitions rather than the mission, the good of the organization, or the well-being of the people. They are like the mayor who was asked where he stood on a particular issue. He answered, "Well, some of my friends are for it. Some are against it. As for me, I'm for my friends." Once again, try not to get involved in the politics, and as much as you can, insulate yourself from him.

CONTROLLING LEADERS

Have you ever worked for someone who wants to be in the middle of everything you do? Few things are more frustrating for a competent person. It's

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difficult to generate momentum when the person you work for is continually interrupting your progress by micromanaging you.

People who micromanage others are often driven by one of two things: the desire for perfection, which is unobtainable, or the belief that no one can do a job as well as they can, which really boils down to their thinking others' contributions aren't as valuable as their own. Neither makes for positive working conditions for the people answering to them.

The first thing you can do when working for this kind of boss is lead yourself well, which I discuss in the next chapter. You can also communicate continually what you're accomplishing. Unfortunately, this takes time. But if you keep your boss continually in the loop, he may try to control you less. And if you over-communicate, he may even get to the point where he asks you for *less* information and stops trying to control you.

LIMITATIONS ON YOU

One of the toughest things about working for a weak leader is that you often can't be sure of where you stand. This creates tension and confusion. If your boss doesn't like what you do, she can respond by firing you, demoting you, or moving you to another

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area of the business. If that does not create tension, nothing will. Adding to that tension are some other factors:

1. LACK OF EMPOWERMENT

How much authority and responsibility does your boss give you, and how clear are the lines? You may have some power to make some decisions. But you also lack power. The authority you do possess is not your own. And if you overstep your authority, you can get yourself into real trouble. Not everyone experiences the freedom to succeed—and safely fail. How clearly the lines of authority and responsibility have been drawn greatly impacts your state of mind. The more vaguely the lines are drawn, the greater the potential for stress.

2. UNDERMINED INITIATIVE

If you're a naturally good leader, you probably don't think in terms of boundaries; instead, you think in terms of opportunities. You're an initiator. After all, the number one characteristic of leaders is the ability to make things happen. Under a good boss, this trait often leads to the expansion of responsibilities. Under a bad boss, it often leads to conflict.

You need to realize that the stronger your natural desire to initiate, the greater the potential for tension and conflict with a weak leader. If you continually

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push the limits without tact or wisdom, it's likely you will rub others the wrong way, especially if your initiative makes your boss feel threatened.

3. AN ENVIRONMENT THAT DOESN'T VALUE LEADERSHIP

Every organization has its own unique environment. If you have a military background, you can't walk into a corporate environment and expect it to function like the army or marines. If your experience is in large corporations, and you go to work in a mom-and-pop business, you will have problems if you don't adapt. A small business owner wouldn't do well in a military environment without making changes to the way they lead. That's just common sense.

How much of a factor is the environment of your organization? Are you having difficulty because you're not only bucking your boss but also fighting the culture of the entire organization?

You need to assess that because if your boss can't or won't lead and he's representative of the culture of the entire organization, you're always going to have a difficult time there—unless widespread changes occur across the board.

4. LACK OF CLEAR JOB PARAMETERS

Have you ever noticed the level of tension you experience when starting a new job? It's pretty high,

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isn't it? The less familiar the work, the greater the tension. Why? Because you don't know what's really expected of you.

That may be how you feel working for a bad boss. You may not know what's expected of you. If you're working without a job description or clear expectations, you won't feel like you're on solid ground. This is another source of daily tension.

5. LACK OF APPRECIATION

When you work in the middle of an organization under a weak boss, you may not get much public recognition or appreciation. That's just the way it is. The greater your desire to receive credit and recognition, the more frustrated you are likely to become. You need to decide for yourself if you receive enough satisfaction to keep you going where you are.

If the leader you have to follow isn't a good leader, it doesn't mean that you can't succeed. But to be frank, it will be more difficult. So, what can you do? You can always quit. But what if you love the organization you work for? What if you believe in the vision and want to advance it? What if you enjoy the other people you work with and want to help them? That makes quitting a difficult choice. And if you *do* quit, what if you find yourself in the same kind of situation in a new organization?

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN BOSSES DON'T LEAD

What if you leave this job to escape a bad boss, and you find yourself working for—another bad boss?

The good news is you do not have to be held hostage by your circumstances or position. You can learn to make the best of a difficult situation. And you can take the high road while doing it. You don't have to become the CEO of the organization or the head of the department to lead effectively. You can make a positive impact through your leadership where you are, even if you report to someone who is one of the bad-boss types I described. How? By leading yourself well. By finding ways to work with your boss. By developing your influence wherever you are. By avoiding the most common landmines that come from working with a bad boss. And by growing and proving your value every day.

I admit: these solutions won't fix your situation overnight. And you will continue to face challenges. Few things can be more maddening than working for an ineffective leader. But you can't control your leader. You have no control over anyone but yourself. So that's where you need to start.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOP YOUR
INFLUENCE
WHEREVER YOU ARE





Most people who work for a boss who can't or won't lead typically want one thing: a new position with power that will free them from their boss. I'll tell you the biggest problem with that thinking. A position isn't the answer.

If I had to identify the number one misconception people have about leadership, it would be the belief that power comes from having a position or title. It's not really true. The Law of Influence in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* states it clearly: "The true measure of leadership is influence—nothing more, nothing less." You don't need to possess a position to lead or get things done. Nor do you have to work for a great boss to be successful. The best way to get work done, get along with colleagues, lead a team, and even work better with a boss, is to develop your influence.

If you've read some of my other leadership books, you might be aware of a leadership identification tool I call "The Five Levels of Leadership," which I first introduced in *Developing the Leader Within You*. It captures the dynamics of leadership development as well as anything I know. In it, I describe the first and *lowest* level of leadership as Position. That's

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where people follow a leader only because they have to. Leaders who rely on position use their *rights* as leaders to coerce people. This means that a positional leader's influence will not extend beyond the lines of his or her job description. Leaders who rely solely on their position or title get the most limited results.

To progress in influence, you have to move up the stairsteps of leadership from the first to the second level, called Permission. This is based on relationships where people follow you because they *want* to. Once you've developed relationships, you can start working on the third level, Production, which is based on results. This is where people follow because of what you have done for the organization. The next level up is called People Development, and it's based on reproduction. People follow because of what you have done for them. There is also a fifth and final level, called the Pinnacle, which is based on respect. This is where people follow because of who you are and what you represent. Few people reach that level. But the important thing to remember is that influence begins with building positive relationships and doesn't depend on position.

With every person in your organization, you are on a different level of influence, based on your history with that person. We all start at the bottom with all individuals and have to work our way up the five levels with each person, building positive relationships,

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helping them and the team produce, and investing in them personally. It doesn't matter what your role is or whether you have a formal title. True, the lower your stated position, the less positional authority you possess. But that doesn't limit your ability to develop influence. You don't need any kind of title or position to get started. You can increase your influence no matter where you are in an organization.

WHY PEOPLE OFTEN WAIT TO DEVELOP INFLUENCE

Sadly, too many people wait too long to start working to develop influence in their organizations. They often wait because they buy into myths that make them believe it's too early to begin leading others. Often they're waiting for a position to give them permission. I hope that's not the case for you. Take a look at these reasons people wait.

I. THE DESTINATION MYTH:

《 《 *“When I become the boss, I'll
start learning to lead.”* 》 》

In 2003, Charlie Wetzel, my writer, decided he wanted to tackle a goal he had held for more than

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a decade: Run a marathon. Do you think Charlie just showed up at the starting line on race day and said, “Okay, I guess it’s time to figure out how to run a marathon”? Of course not. He started doing his homework a year in advance. He read reviews of marathons held around the United States and learned that the Chicago Marathon—held in October—enjoys great weather most years. It utilizes a fast, flat race course. It has a reputation for having the best fan support of any marathon in the nation. It was the perfect place for a first-time marathoner.

He also trained. He started the process in mid-April, increasing his mileage every week and eventually working his way up to two training runs of twenty miles each in addition to his other sessions. When race day came around in October, he was ready—and he completed the race.

Leadership is very similar. If you want to succeed, you need to learn as much as you can about leadership before you have a leadership position. You need to start developing your influence before you need it. Leading as well as you can wherever you are will prepare you for more and greater responsibility. Becoming a good leader is a lifelong learning process. If you don’t develop your influence, try out your leadership skills, and test your decision-making process when the stakes are small and the risks are low, you’re likely to get into trouble at higher levels

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when the cost of mistakes is high, the impact is far reaching, and the exposure is greater. Mistakes made on a small scale can be easily overcome. Mistakes made when you're at the top cost the organization greatly, and they damage a leader's credibility. As UCLA basketball coach John Wooden said, "When opportunity comes, it's too late to prepare."

2. THE INEXPERIENCE MYTH:

《 《 "When I'm the boss, I'll be able
to control what happens." 》 》

Have you ever found yourself saying something like, "You know, if I were in charge, we wouldn't have done this, and we wouldn't have done that. Things sure would be different around here if I were the boss"? If so, let me tell you that there's good news and bad news.

The good news is that the desire to improve an organization and the belief that you're capable of doing it are often the marks of a leader. As Andy Stanley said, "If you're a leader and leaders work for you, they think they can do a better job than you. They just do (just like you do). And that's not wrong; that's just leadership."³ The desires to innovate, to improve, to create, and to find a better way are all leadership characteristics.

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Now here's the bad news. Without experience as the boss, you probably overestimate the amount of control you would have if you were in charge. The higher you go—and the larger the organization—the more you realize that many factors control the organization. To make positive changes, you need influence. And the higher you go, the more you need. A position does not give you control—or protect you.

To think that being the boss is easier is to think the grass is greener on the other side of the fence. Being in charge has its own set of problems and challenges. In leadership—no matter where you are in an organization—the bottom line is always influence.

3. THE FREEDOM MYTH:

《 《 “When I become the boss,
I'll do what I want.” 》 》

Sometimes I think people get the wrong idea about leadership. Many people hope that it's a ticket to freedom. It will provide a solution to their professional and career problems. But being the boss is not a cure-all. Have you entertained the idea that being in charge will change your life? Have thoughts such as these come to mind from time to time?

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When I get to the top, I'll have it made.

When I finally finish climbing the corporate ladder, I'll have time to rest.

When I own my own company, I'll be able to do whatever I want.

When I'm in charge, the sky will be the limit.

Anybody who has owned a company or been the top leader in an organization knows that those ideas are little more than fantasies. Being the boss doesn't mean you don't have limits. It doesn't remove the lid from your potential. It doesn't matter what job you do or what position you obtain; you will have limits. That's just the way life is.

When you move up in an organization, the weight of your responsibility increases. In many organizations, as you move up the ladder, you may even find that the amount of responsibility you take on increases much faster than the amount of authority you're given. When you go higher, more is expected of you, the pressure is greater, and the impact of your decisions weighs more heavily. You will need influence even more since your title won't do much for you. It's important to take these facts into account.

Customers have great freedom and can do almost anything they want. They have no real responsibility to the organization. Workers have more obligations. Leaders have even more, and because of that, they

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become more limited in terms of their freedom. It is a limitation they choose willingly, but they are limited just the same.

If you want to expand the limits of your effectiveness, there is a better solution. Develop your influence and learn to lead. Those actions will blow the lid off of your potential.

4. THE POTENTIAL MYTH:

《 《 *“I can't reach my potential
until I'm the boss.”* 》 》

How many kids say, “Someday I want to grow up to be vice president of the United States”? Probably none. If a child has political aspirations, he wants to be president. If she has a bent toward business, she wants to own the company or be CEO of the corporation. Few people aspire to reach the middle.

Yet the reality is that most people will spend their careers somewhere in the middle of organizations and will still have bosses. Is that okay? Or should everybody play career “king of the hill” and try to reach the top?

I believe that people should strive for the top of their game, not the top of their organization. Each of us should work to reach our own potential, not necessarily the corner office. Often you can make

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the greatest impact from somewhere other than first place—as long as you have developed influence.

5. THE ALL-OR-NOTHING MYTH:

《 《 *“If I can’t be the boss, then there’s
no point in trying to lead.”* 》 》

When I meet people in social settings and they ask me what I do for a living, some of them are intrigued when I say I write books and speak. And they often ask what I write about. When I say leadership, the response that makes me chuckle most goes something like this: “Oh. Well, when I become a leader, I’ll read some of your books!” What I don’t say (but want to) is: “If you’d read some of my books, maybe you’d become a leader.”

You can’t allow the frustrations you feel to keep you from developing your leadership and growing your influence. You don’t have to be the boss to be successful. If you let the frustration of not being the boss last too long, you may become disillusioned, bitter, and cynical. What good can you do by sitting on the sidelines? Get into the game. You do not need to be the boss to make a difference. Leadership is not meant to be an all-or-nothing proposition. You can make an impact from wherever you are in an organization. But it takes influence.

HOW DEVELOPING INFLUENCE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

It's hard to overestimate the value of people with influence who lead well in an organization. Remember: leadership is influence. As you develop your influence, you become a better leader. As you build relationships, people want to work with you. As you help them become productive, the team improves. As you invest in them and develop them, they work harder for you and develop loyalty. Developing influence is the first and most important step in becoming a better leader.

In places where the top leaders try to keep everyone else down, the overall leadership is usually pretty poor. Why? Because when all the power is held by the bosses at the top and there are no leaders in the middle to help them, the entire organization suffers. The boss has to make everything happen himself because he hasn't empowered anyone to step up and help him.

Look around your organization. Are there good leaders who have developed influence working to make good things happen? If not, you can still develop your leadership and start making a difference. If there are, try to learn from them. Not only will it help them and you, but it will also help organization and make it a better place to work for everyone. Here's why:

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EVERY TIME YOU ADD A GOOD LEADER, YOU GET A BETTER TEAM

Good leaders who have developed influence maximize the performance of those on their team. They set direction. They inspire their people and help them work together. They get results. This is easy to see in sports where the only thing that changes on a team is the coach. When a better leader comes in, the same players often perform at a much higher level than they did before.

The same thing happens in any kind of organization. When a strong leader takes over a sales team, their performance goes up. When a good manager takes over at a restaurant, the operation runs more smoothly. When a better foreman runs the crew, the people get more done.

If you were to look at your entire organization (assuming it's not a mom-and-pop-sized operation), you would be able to locate the quality leaders even before you met them. All you would have to do is look for the teams with consistently high results. That is where the good leaders are.

EVERY TIME YOU ADD A GOOD LEADER, ALL THE LEADERS IN THE ORGANIZATION GET BETTER

When a good leader emerges or joins the team, it makes the other leaders take notice. Good leaders bring out the best, not only in their team members

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but also in other leaders. Good leaders raise the bar when it comes to performance and teamwork, and this often challenges other leaders in the organization to improve, including weak bosses.

GOOD LEADERS ADD VALUE TO THE LEADERS ABOVE THEM

Leaders in the middle of a larger organization are close to the people in the trenches, and as a result, they know more about what's going on. They understand the people who are doing the work and the issues they face. They also have greater influence at those lower levels than the leaders higher up in the organization.

When there are no good leaders lower down in an organization, then everyone and everything in the organization waits for the people at the top. On the other hand, when good leaders closer to the action use their influence and commitment to assist good leaders higher up, they help to “stretch” those higher leaders’ influence beyond their personal reach. As a result, the top leaders are able to do more than they would ever be able to do on their own, and that benefits the organization.

GOOD LEADERS IN THE MIDDLE RELEASE TOP LEADERS TO FOCUS ON THEIR PRIORITIES

If your goal is to assume more responsibility and advance in your organization, then you need to

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realize that the higher you climb in an organization as a leader, the more you will see but the less you will actually be able to do. You can't move up and keep doing all the tasks that you do now. As you move up, you will have to hand off many of your old responsibilities to others. If the people who are supposed to do those tasks don't perform them well, then you will have to keep taking those things back and doing them yourself. You probably will not be able to do your new responsibilities effectively if that happens. The better you become at leading where you are, the better you will become at empowering others, and the greater your potential to do what you do best as you move up.

GOOD LEADERSHIP WHERE YOU ARE CHALLENGES LEADERS ABOVE YOU TO CONTINUE GROWING

When you grow your influence and become a better leader, it shows. Most of the time that makes the leaders you work for want to improve themselves to "keep pace." Part of that comes from healthy competition. If you're in a race and someone is getting ready to pass you, it makes you want to pick up your pace and move faster.

There is also a contribution factor. When team leaders see other team leaders making a significant contribution, it often inspires them to step up. There

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is a natural joy that comes from being on a team that is functioning on an extremely high level.

GOOD LEADERSHIP THROUGHOUT THE ORGANIZATION GIVES IT A FUTURE

No organization keeps moving forward and growing using yesterday's ideas and ways of doing things. Future success requires innovation and growth. And it requires the continual emergence of new leaders. Today's workers are tomorrow's leaders in the middle of an organization. And today's leaders in the middle will be tomorrow's leaders at the top.

TODAY'S WORKERS TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Implement current ideas	Generate new ideas
Identify and define problems	Solve problems
Get along with the people they have	Attract sharp people
Work within the current framework	Take risks
Value consistency	Value and spot opportunities

If you keep developing your influence and growing your leadership, you will probably get your opportunity to lead at a higher level. You will move from

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being today's worker to tomorrow's leader. To become an even better leader, learn how to look at the people working with you and think about how you can prepare them to join you and eventually take your place.

Leadership expert Max DePree said, "Succession is one of the key responsibilities of leadership." That is true. There is no success without a successor. Being a leader is about more than just growing your influence, doing a good job now, and making things easier for the people around you. It is about making sure the organization has a chance to be good tomorrow too.

WHO PEOPLE WANT TO FOLLOW

How would you assess your current level of influence with others in your organization? Do people follow you now? Do they listen to your ideas and respect your opinions? Does your boss? If not, have you thought about why not? To increase your influence and become a better leader, you need to work on becoming the kind of person others want to follow. Consider these qualities, which any person can cultivate.

PEOPLE FOLLOW PEOPLE THEY KNOW—SOMEONE WHO CARES

Many people try to move others by criticizing them or trying to "power up" on them. People generally

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respond by becoming defensive, behaving combatively, or isolating themselves. Protestant reformer John Knox said, “You cannot antagonize and influence at the same time.”

On the other hand, if people care about each individual as a person, then those individuals respond well to them. The greater the depth of the concern, the broader and longer lasting the influence.

People can sense how you feel about them. They can tell the difference between people who are using them for their own gain and those who want to help them succeed. People warm up to warm people. They get to know the heart of someone who cares, and they respond well. If you go out of your way to care about others and help them, then they will go out of their way to help you when you ask them to.

PEOPLE FOLLOW PEOPLE THEY TRUST— SOMEONE WITH GOOD CHARACTER

We tend to put a lot of emphasis on intelligence and skill in this country. And while those things are important, they cannot substitute for strong character. Most people would acknowledge that trustworthiness is important in a leader. What some people don't recognize is the importance of trustworthiness in would-be leaders.

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If you desire to develop influence with others, then work on embodying and exhibiting the kind of character that you would find admirable in a good, trustworthy leader. That will pave the way for relationships with others today and prepare you for leadership tomorrow.

PEOPLE FOLLOW PEOPLE THEY RESPECT— SOMEONE WITH HIGH COMPETENCE

Respect is almost always gained on difficult ground. A leadership position will help someone only until difficulties arise. Then the leader must rise to meet those difficulties. People who are incapable of meeting challenges may desire respect from their team members and peers, but they rarely get it. They may be liked if they possess good character and care for others, but they won't be highly respected if they can't get the job done. People may treat them kindly, but they won't be influenced by them. Everyone may have the right to speak, but not everyone has earned the right to be heard.

While poor leaders demand respect, competent people command respect. Being able to do a job well brings a person credibility. If you think you can do a job—that's confidence. If you actually can do it—that's competence. And there is no substitute for it.

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PEOPLE FOLLOW PEOPLE THEY ADMIRE— SOMEONE WITH COMMITMENT

Think of some of the great leaders you admire. When I think of people like Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King Jr., and John Wesley, one of the first qualities that comes to mind is their commitment. They gave everything they had to leading according to their principles.

Several years ago, I coauthored a book called *Becoming a Person of Influence* with my friend Jim Dornan. The book's chapters are based on an acronym that describes the qualities of an influencer:

Integrity—builds relationships on trust

Nurturing—cares about people as individuals

Faith—believes in people

Listening—values what others have to say

Understanding—sees from their point of view

Enlarging—helps others become bigger

Navigating—assists others through difficulties

Connecting—initiates positive relationships

Empowering—gives them the power to lead

If you work hard to do all of these things with the people in your organization, you will develop influence. The secret is to think about using your influence to help people. That's what leadership is all about.

WHAT TO EXPECT ON THE INFLUENCE JOURNEY

As you work to develop your influence by building relationships and helping people, your leadership will develop. As you strive to become the best leader you can be, keep the following things in mind:

1. LEADERSHIP IS A JOURNEY THAT STARTS WHERE YOU ARE, NOT WHERE YOU WANT TO BE

To know how to get where you want to go, you need to know where you are. You need to focus on what you're doing now. Award-winning sportswriter Ken Rosenthal said, "Each time you decide to grow again, you realize you are starting at the bottom of another ladder." You need to have your eyes fixed on your current responsibilities, not the ones you wish to have someday. To succeed where you are, do your job with excellence and build relationships to develop greater influence.

2. LEADERSHIP SKILLS ARE SIMILAR, BUT THE "LEAGUE OF PLAY" CHANGES

If you do get promoted as a result of increasing your influence and improving your leadership, don't think that because your new office is just a few feet down the hall from your old place that the difference is just a few steps. When you get "called up" to

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another level of leadership, the quality of your game must rise. Each new level requires a higher degree of skill. The easiest place to see this is in sports. Some players can make the jump from recreational league to high school. Fewer can make it from high school to college. And only a handful can make it from college to the professional level.

Your best chance of making it into the next “league of play” is to grow on the current level and learn all you can so that you will be better at the next level.

3. GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES COME ONLY AFTER HANDLING SMALLER ONES WELL

When I sign books, sometimes people will confide in me that they desire to write books too. “How do I get started?” they ask.

“How much writing do you do now?” I ask.

Some tell me about articles and other pieces they are writing, and I simply encourage them; but most of the time they sheepishly respond, “Well, I haven’t really written anything yet.”

“Then you need to start writing,” I explain. “You’ve got to start small and work up to writing a book.”

Leadership is the same. You’ve got to start small and work to bigger things. A person who has never led before needs to start by trying to influence just

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one other person. Someone who has some influence should try to build a team. Start where you are and do what's necessary.

All good leadership begins where you are. The small responsibilities you have before you now comprise the first great leadership conquest you must make. Don't try to conquer the world until you've first taken care of things in your own backyard.

4. LEADING AT YOUR CURRENT LEVEL CREATES YOUR RÉSUMÉ FOR GOING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Your track record where you work now is what leaders will look at when trying to decide if you can do a bigger job. I know that when I interview someone for a job, I put 90 percent of the emphasis on the track record. If you want to get the chance to lead on another level, then your best chance for success is to lead well where you are now. Develop your influence and use it positively to help others and benefit the organization. Every day that you lead and succeed, you are building a résumé for your next job.

5. WHEN YOU CAN LEAD VOLUNTEERS WELL, YOU CAN LEAD ALMOST ANYONE

If you want to test your ability to develop positive influence, then try leading volunteers. Why is that so difficult? Because with volunteers, you have no

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leverage. It takes every bit of influence and leadership skill you have to get people who don't have to comply to do what you ask. If you're not challenging enough, they lose interest. If you push too hard, they drop out. If your people skills are weak, they won't spend any time with you. If you cannot communicate the vision, they won't know where to go or why.

If your organization has any kind of community service focus, volunteer. Test yourself. See how people respond when you try to get things done through a team. If you can thrive in that environment, then you have an idea of how good your influencing ability is. Lead volunteers well, and you probably possess many of the qualifications to go to another level in your organization.

Always remember the truth of what Donald McGannon, former CEO of Westinghouse Broadcasting Corporation, stated: "Leadership is action, not position." Taking action—and helping others to do the same in a coordinated effort—is the essence of leadership. That takes influence, and that qualifies you to do bigger and better things. Do the things where you are at the highest level of excellence, and you won't remain there long.