

JOHN C.
MAXWELL

#1 New York Times BESTSELLING AUTHOR

THE

LEADER'S
GREATEST
RETURN

ATTRACTING, DEVELOPING,
AND MULTIPLYING LEADERS

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HARPERCOLLINS
LEADERSHIP

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INTRODUCING JOHN MAXWELL PUBLISHING



In 1976, after speaking to a group of leaders at a Fourth of July event, Dr. John C. Maxwell left the stage with an unquestionable sense of calling in his heart: to add value to leaders who would multiply value to others. That sense of purpose drove Dr. Maxwell to begin his decades-long dedication to the study and training of leadership and resulted in the global transformation movement he oversees today.

The outflow of that legacy is best represented by Dr. Maxwell's writing. With over one hundred books to his credit, Dr. Maxwell's output has changed millions of lives across the globe. In almost any room where he speaks, he is preceded by at least one book that has impacted and shaped the life of a leader, confirming his belief that writing allows him to touch a leader he might otherwise never meet in-person.

It is in keeping with Dr. Maxwell's calling and belief about the power of words to impact leaders that HarperCollins Publishers and the John Maxwell Company have created the John Maxwell Publishing imprint, a new leadership-focused division of HarperCollins Publishers that seeks to extend and expand Dr. Maxwell's legacy.

The mission of John Maxwell Publishing is to discover and publish books that identify with John Maxwell's personal values and philosophy

of leadership. The authors will be men and women of integrity in their personal, business, and spiritual lives, who have demonstrated a desire to add value to leaders who multiply that value to people, whether through their teaching, writing, or business acumen.

As Dr. Maxwell himself has said, “One is too small a number to achieve greatness.” Through this imprint, Dr. Maxwell’s calling to add value to leaders who multiply value to others will not only continue but strengthen. These authors will add to and expand on his vision of transformation around the world.

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INTRODUCTION:

Everyone Wins When You Develop Leaders

Why should you develop leaders? Why should you dedicate the time, effort, energy, and resources to help other people rise up and lead? Is it worth it? Can it really make a difference? Does the return warrant all the effort that's required?

Absolutely! Everywhere you look, there is a leadership deficit. In countries all around the world, there are not enough good leaders. That is certainly true in the United States. I think Americans of every party would agree that there are not enough good leaders. The same is true at the state and local levels: we need more and better leaders. And in businesses, nonprofits, and families—there are not enough good leaders!

The good news is that leaders can be developed, and everyone wins when leaders develop other good leaders. If you are a leader—at any level or in any capacity—your organization will benefit when you start developing leaders. And you can do that beginning today.

I want to help you develop leaders. I want to show you the pathway to receiving the leader's greatest return. There is nothing in this world that gives a greater ROI to a leader than attracting, developing, and multiplying leaders. It's the key to success for any country, family, organization, or institution.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DEVELOPING LEADERS

It's taken me decades to learn what I know about developing leaders. I've had my failures, as well as my successes. I've poured my life into people only to have them walk away or disqualify themselves. I've seen potential in people who couldn't see it in themselves, and as a result, never grew to be who they could be. I've been disappointed and discouraged in the process. But I will never give up. There is no better investment than developing leaders.

As you take this leadership journey, there are some things you need to prepare yourself for:

1. Developing Leaders Is Going to Be Difficult but Worthwhile

If you've ever led people in any capacity, I think you'll agree that leadership is hard work. There are no two consecutive easy days in the life of leaders. If today is easy, you know how tomorrow will probably go. But everything worthwhile is uphill. If the purpose of life was ease and comfort, no sensible person would ever take on the demands of leadership.

Developing leaders is even harder. It's like herding cats. That is why so many people who lead let themselves become comfortable attracting and leading followers instead of seeking out and developing leaders. Followers usually follow. Leaders, not so much.

However, the work of investing your life in developing other leaders has a high return. As my friend Art Williams is apt to say, "I don't promise you it will be easy. I do promise you it will be worthwhile."¹

As I think about developing people, I can't help smiling. For forty-seven years I have given my heart and soul to helping people learn to lead. My journey began with the desire to train a few leaders, and it has taken me far beyond my wildest dreams. Today, I have seen millions of men and women trained as leaders. When I first started, I couldn't imagine writing a book on leadership. Once I gained enough experience to write about it, I thought I would write a total of two books on the subject. Now

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I've written dozens. In the beginning, I started out developing just a few leaders in my community. Now my organizations have developed leaders in every country in the world.

I'm smiling, not because of the size of the numbers, but because each number represents a person. I may not know all of their names, but each person the people in my organizations have trained lives a better life because another leader lifted him or her up. And these developed leaders are in a better position to improve the lives of the people around them and to make a difference.

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BE WORTHWHILE."

—ART WILLIAMS

At age twenty-five, I discovered that everything rises and falls on leadership. I believed that truth with great certainty, and it propelled me to develop myself as a leader. Today my conviction is even greater, and it drives me to develop other leaders. That task is worthy of my best efforts, it adds the greatest value to others, and it gives me great joy. Developing leaders is the one activity that compounds a leader's time, influence, energy, vision, culture, finances, and mission.

2. Developing Leaders Is a Job That Never Comes to an End

When I realized the importance of leadership at age twenty-one, I began my intentional development as a leader. As I got started, I thought that at some point I would become a leadership expert. I wondered how long it would take, when I would reach the finish line. In five years? Ten years? Certainly by fifteen years I'd know what I needed to know, right? Today in my early seventies, I finally have the answer. There is no finish line! The more I know about leadership, the more I know that I don't know. I am hungrier now to learn about leadership than I have ever been.

Gayle Beebe, the president of Westmont College, has studied leadership development extensively. In *The Shaping of an Effective Leader*, he wrote:

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Our understanding of leadership does not come to us all at once. It takes time. In our instant-oriented culture we often want to short-circuit the thinking, reflecting and acting that mark our progressive development as leaders. Understanding how leaders develop and why they matter requires discernment, wisdom and insight.²

It also requires time. If developing ourselves as leaders is a lifelong process, then we should also expect the development of others in leadership to be an ongoing process that never ends. Just as individuals never arrive, neither do organizations. In all my years helping organizations find, raise up, and develop leaders—and I’ve helped more than I can count—not once has a company spokesperson said, “Don’t help us. We have too many good leaders.” There is always a leadership shortage.

This is true in every organization. My companies and nonprofits all focus on leadership development, and for several years I’ve been called a leadership expert.³ Yet what do all of my organizations need? More good leaders. The organizations have leadership cultures, leadership vision, and leadership mentoring, yet we still need more and better leaders. Why? Because everything rises and falls on leadership. When an organization stops growing leaders, it stops growing.

Recently, I visited a Napa Valley vineyard with friends, and the vineyard’s third-generation owner pointed out a stone wall. He explained that his grandfather, the founder, had started building the wall. Later, the founder’s son had added to it, as had his son, the current owner. Listening to him speak and show us the different sections of the wall, I could sense his pride and the respect for his father and grandfather. There was a sense of tradition and a shared vision that had crossed the generations. There was a strong sense of legacy, which is something that cannot be rushed.

If you desire to fulfill a bold vision or do something great, you have to let go of a microwave mind-set for leadership. The process can’t be done instantly. It’s slow, like a Crock-Pot. Anything worthwhile takes time. You must give up looking to cross a finish line and instead find your own

internal fulfillment line. That's something you can cross every day when you embrace the process of developing leaders.

3. Developing Leaders Is the Best Way to Grow Any Organization

When conducting leadership conferences, I am often asked about how to improve and grow an organization. The answer is straightforward. Grow a leader—grow the organization. A company cannot grow throughout until its leaders grow within.

I am often amazed at the amount of money and energy organizations spend on activities that will not produce growth. They pour money into marketing, yet they don't train their employees in how to treat customers when they show up. You can say customers are your priority, but they know the difference between good service and hollow promises. Slick advertising and catchy slogans will never overcome incompetent leadership.

Or they reorganize, hoping that shuffling people around or renaming departments will produce growth. That doesn't work. The strength of any organization is a direct result of the strength of its leaders. Weak leaders equal weak organizations. Strong leaders equal strong organizations. Leadership makes the determination.

If you want to grow or strengthen your organization or department, start by developing those closest to you, because they will determine the level of success your team will achieve. The first law of leadership I wrote about in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* is called the Law of the Lid, and it says leadership ability determines a person's level of effectiveness.⁴ In other words, how well you lead determines how well you succeed. That's true not just for an individual, but also for a group. How

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well they lead will determine how well the organization succeeds. A group of average leaders cannot build an above-average company. The potential leaders on your team are either an asset or a liability. As management expert Peter Drucker said, “No executive has ever suffered because his subordinates were strong and effective.”⁵

People too often overvalue their dream and undervalue their team. They think, *If I believe it, I can achieve it*. But that’s simply not true. Belief alone is not enough to achieve anything. It takes more than that. Your team will determine the reality of your dream. A big dream with a bad team is a nightmare.

4. Developing Leaders Is the Only Way to Create a Leadership Culture

In the past decade, people have begun to realize the importance of culture in their organizations. Culture impacts every aspect of how organizations function. A negative culture creates a terrible environment. It’s like a fire that spreads, creating destruction.

When I became the leader of an organization that had stopped grow-

ing and didn’t possess a leadership culture, one of the first things I taught my leaders was the lesson of the two buckets. When there are problems in the organization, they’re like sparks and fires. Leaders are often the first people to arrive on the scene, and when they do, they always have two buckets in their hands. One contains water and the other gasoline. The spark they encounter will either become a raging fire because they pour gasoline on it, or it can be extinguished because they pour water on it. I wanted to train them to use the water, not the gasoline.

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As a leader, you get the culture you create, and the nature of the culture affects what you can or cannot do in your organization. If you want

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to develop leaders, it's certainly easier to do when you have a leadership culture. And that kind of culture can only be created by the leaders within the organization.

Mark Miller, Chick-fil-A's vice president of high-performance leadership, has trained leaders at Chick-fil-A for years, and he's written extensively about it. In his book *Leaders Made Here*, he wrote:

How do you ensure you'll have the needed leaders to fuel your future success?

The answer, in short: Build a leadership culture.

Let's be clear on terms from the beginning. A leadership culture exists when leaders are routinely and systematically developed, *and* you have a surplus of leaders ready for the next opportunity or challenge.⁶

Miller said that the existing leaders most often hold back weak organizations from developing a leadership culture. They rationalize that they're already doing well enough, or they think they're too busy to develop leaders. But that creates a cycle of mediocrity.

If you're a leader in an organization, only you can create a positive leadership culture, and you can do it only by developing leaders. In his book, Miller described the best ways to do that:

1. *Define it*—Forge a consensus regarding our organization's working definition of leadership.
2. *Teach it*—Ensure everyone knows our leadership point of view and leaders have the skills required to succeed.
3. *Practice it*—Create opportunities for leaders and emerging leaders to lead; stretch assignments prove and improve leaders.
4. *Measure it*—Track the progress of our leadership development efforts, adjusting strategies and tactics accordingly.
5. *Model it*—Walk the talk and lead by example—people always watch the leader.⁷

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If the organization doesn't already possess a leadership culture, creating one is a slow process. But it's worth it. Why? Because developing leaders is the only way to grow, improve, create momentum, and achieve greater success.

One of my favorite quotes is by nineteenth-century steel magnate and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. He said, "I think a fit epitaph for me would be, 'Here lies a man who knew how to get around men much cleverer than himself.'"⁸ The only surefire way to achieve something like that is to develop more leaders so that they reach their potential, and that's not something any leader can afford to delegate or abdicate. It takes a leader to show and grow another leader.

My desire in this book is to take you through the entire process, step-by-step. If you desire to improve your team and achieve your dream, you will need to learn how to take each of the following steps:

1. **IDENTIFYING LEADERS:** Find Them So You Can Develop Them
2. **ATTRACTING LEADERS:** Invite Them to the Leadership Table
3. **UNDERSTANDING LEADERS:** Connect with Them Before You Lead Them
4. **MOTIVATING LEADERS:** Encourage Them to Give Their Best
5. **EQUIPPING LEADERS:** Train Them to Be Great at Their Job
6. **EMPOWERING LEADERS:** Release Them to Reach Their Potential
7. **POSITIONING LEADERS:** Team Them Up to Multiply Their Impact
8. **MENTORING LEADERS:** Coach Them to the Next Level
9. **REPRODUCING LEADERS:** Show Them How to Develop Leaders
10. **COMPOUNDING LEADERS:** Receive the Highest Return of Developing Leaders

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My friend Zig Ziglar used to say, “Success is the maximum utilization of the ability that you have.”⁹ I love that definition, and I believe it applies to an individual. But for a leader, success requires something more. Success for leaders can be defined as the maximum utilization of the abilities of those working with them. There’s only one way for a leader to help people maximize their abilities and reach their potential, and that’s to help them develop as leaders. It is my desire that the following pages help you do exactly that.

CHAPTER 1

IDENTIFYING LEADERS

Find Them So You Can Develop Them

One of my favorite activities when I speak is answering specific questions from the leaders in the audience. Recently, at a conference put on by Chick-fil-A, someone asked how I develop good leaders. “First,” I responded, “you need to know what a good leader looks like.”

I know that may sound simplistic, but it’s true. And I’ve found that most people have a difficult time describing what a good leader—or good potential leader—looks like. Leadership experts and authors James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner said, “Our images of who’s a leader and who’s not are all mixed up in our preconceived notions about what leadership is and isn’t.”¹ How can people find something they can’t identify?

As a speaker, I do a lot of traveling. And often my host will send a driver to pick me up from the airport. Over the years, I’ve found there are two types of people who look for me. The first stands near baggage claim, holding a sign or iPad showing my name. I have to go over and find that person and identify myself. The second type of person comes over and finds me as I step off the escalator and says, “Hi, Mr. Maxwell. I’m here to take you to your hotel.”

I’ve never met either of these people, yet the second type is able to find

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me. How? They recognize me from a photograph they've found in one of my books or on a website. They took the time to be proactive and know who they're looking for.

As you prepare to develop leaders, which type of person do you want to be? Do you want to know what you're looking for in potential leaders and be able to find them? Or do you want to hold up a sign and hope somebody comes and finds you? It's your choice.

For many years I've been friends with Bob Taylor, cofounder of Taylor Guitars. Bob makes some of the finest guitars in the world. What's his secret? He'll tell you it's the design and manufacturing process. He can make a guitar out of anything, and to prove it, he even once made a guitar out of scrap wood from an oak pallet. But that's not the norm. He uses the finest woods he can find, and buying them has become more and more difficult, as many of the best exotic woods are on the endangered species list or disappearing altogether. Bob said, "I'm living in the era where you cross the threshold of 'there's all the wood in the world' to 'there's not any more.'"²

In an interview he gave to the *New York Times* more than ten years ago, Bob said, "I used to buy Brazilian rosewood back in the 1970s at the lumber yard for \$2 a square foot. Now it's impossible for us to make a guitar out of it and ship it outside the US. If we do get a little bit of it, it's extremely expensive. The cutting of it has all but halted. Adirondack spruce is unavailable. Mahogany was so plentiful it was a commodity. Now only specialty cutters are getting it and the prices have gone through the roof. All these things happened just in my lifetime."³

That's been such a concern of his that he's dedicating the next twenty years of his life to initiatives to ensure that wood is sourced responsibly and to growing trees for the future—not his future, but the future of others—sixty, eighty, and a hundred years from now. Bob said, "We no longer live in a world of new frontiers and of wasteful use of our natural resources."⁴

Bob knows what he's looking for when it comes to potential guitar wood. If you want to be successful developing leaders, you need to know

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what potential leaders look like, and you need to be as tenacious as Bob Taylor is when he's sourcing wood for guitars. Every person you bring onto your team will make you either better or worse. And every leader you develop will do the same. Maybe that's why Amazon founder Jeff Bezos remarked, "I'd rather interview 50 people and not hire anyone than hire the wrong person."⁵

THE SIX AS OF IDENTIFICATION

For a leader who develops leaders, there is something scarcer and much more important than ability. It is the ability to recognize ability. One of the primary responsibilities of any successful leader is to identify potential leaders. Peter Drucker observed:

Making the right people decisions is the ultimate means of controlling an organization well. Such decisions reveal how competent management is, what its values are, and whether it takes its job seriously. No matter how hard managers try to keep their decisions a secret—and some still try hard—people decisions cannot be hidden. They are eminently visible. . . .

Executives who do not make the effort to get their people decisions right do more than risk poor performance. They risk losing their organization's respect.⁶

So, how do you do it? How do you identify good potential leaders, people you want to develop? As I said, you need to have a picture of that person, and I want to paint that picture for you. Take a look at these six areas of

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identification and answer each of the corresponding questions, and you'll know what you're looking for.

1. Assessment of Needs: "What Is Needed?"

Who are you looking for? If the mission of your organization were to climb trees, which would you rather do: hire a squirrel or train a horse to do the job? That answer is obvious. What is your organization trying to do? Do you possess a clear target? Do you know what you're going after? That will tell you what kind of leaders you need to find to improve your organization. You'll never hit a target that you haven't identified.

Chick-fil-A's Mark Miller, whom I quoted in the introduction, has vast experience finding and training leaders. He said:

I'm wondering how often, as a leader, we fail to clearly define the target. I think about all the times my leadership efforts have fallen short . . . how many of those failures can be attributed, directly or indirectly, to an unclear target or goal?

There are many things leaders CANNOT do for their people. However, clarity regarding intent should never be in short supply. People must always know what they are trying to accomplish.⁷

If you never defined your target, or you have not revisited it lately, I encourage you to do so now, before you start identifying potential leaders. Answer these questions:

- What is your vision?
- What is your mission?
- Who do you need on your team to accomplish your vision and mission?
- What resources will you need to accomplish your vision and mission?

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Knowing what you need and who you are looking for is essential to success. You can't be haphazard in selecting people to develop and expect to succeed.

2. Assets on Hand: "Who Has Leadership Potential Within the Organization?"

Where is the best place to begin looking for potential leaders to develop? In your own organization or on your team. It just makes sense for so many reasons:

They Are a Known Quantity

Unlike when you interview people from outside, you don't have to imagine how insiders will perform. You don't have to rely on what they say about themselves. You're not limited to hearing the opinions of their handpicked references. You can look at their actual performance to see what they can do. You can observe their strengths. You can personally talk to everyone who works with them to find out about them.

They Already Fit the Culture

Anytime you bring in someone from outside, you have to guess whether that person will really fit your culture and be able to work well with the people in your organization. When someone has already been working in the organization for any length of time, you know if he or she fits. And that individual is already a part of the community.

They Have Already Established Influence

Good leaders, even those with little training or experience, influence other people. When you're trying to identify potential leaders to develop, look for influence. It's a qualification that must be present in someone you wish to develop as a leader, because leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less. If people can't influence others, they can't lead. And if they already have some degree of influence in your organization, they

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already possess an asset that they will be able to use in the future to get things done. It's like having a running head start in a race. When you give them tasks, they will be able to mobilize the people they already influence more quickly.

How do you measure their influence? I recommend you use the 5 Levels of Leadership. Here they are in order from lowest to highest levels of influence:

1. **POSITION:** People follow because of title.
2. **PERMISSION:** People follow because of relationships.
3. **PRODUCTION:** People follow because of results.
4. **PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT:** People follow because of personal life change.
5. **PINNACLE:** People follow because of respect from earned reputation.

Andrew Carnegie was a master at identifying potential leaders. Once asked by a reporter how he had managed to hire forty-three millionaires, Carnegie responded that the men had not been millionaires when they started working for him. They had become millionaires as a result. The reporter next wanted to know how he had developed these men to become such valuable leaders. Carnegie replied, "Men are developed the same way gold is mined. . . . Several tons of dirt must be moved to get an ounce of gold; but you don't go into the mine looking for dirt," he added. "You go in looking for the gold."⁸

I wouldn't call the people who can't lead *dirt*, but I would definitely call the people who can *gold*. Where do you put your focus? On those who can't lead or on those who can—the *gold* within your organization?

One of the best leaders I know is my friend Chris Hodges, the founder of Church of the Highlands in Birmingham, Alabama. He started the church in 2001. It has a weekly attendance of fifty-five thousand people on twenty-two campuses, more than \$260 million in assets, with no debt, and more than twenty-two thousand active volunteers on what he calls

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his dream team. If you don't know anything about the church world, then let me tell you: that's extraordinary!

I love meeting with Chris periodically to talk leadership. On one of those recent occasions, I asked Chris how he identified and developed thousands of leaders. He shared with me his two principles, and I want to share them with you.⁹

First, Gather Many to Find One

Chris starts by taking a broad approach. He told me, "I never know who the next leader will be or where they are going to come from within my organization." So, he developed a leadership farm team, similar to the way Major League Baseball does. Professional baseball teams have farm teams at multiple levels. The players they sign are put on one of those teams according to their current performance level, and they have a chance to work their way up. Their big dream is to make it from the minors to the major-league team.

Chris follows a similar model, except that instead of having Single-, Double-, and Triple-A minor-league teams, he has twenty-two campuses. Each one is a farm team where volunteers are recruited, trained, and given a chance to serve. The potential leaders naturally rise to the top and have places to practice and hone their leadership skills.

Second, See and Speak to People's Leadership Potential

All twenty-two of Chris's campuses are farm teams for leaders, but not all campuses perform equally in that process. Certain campuses identify and develop leaders at a much higher rate than the rest. I asked Chris why, and he said that when he discovered this, he asked why too. It took some research to figure it out, but Chris learned that the successful campuses were led by leaders who not only saw the potential in leaders, but as Chris said, "spoke leadership potential to them."

My friend speaker and author Mark Sanborn said, "Great leaders help people have a larger vision of themselves."¹⁰ That's what Chris's best campus leaders do. That's what all good developers of leaders do, because people often become what the most important influencers in their lives

think and say they will become. If people you care about tell you how terrible you are, you're going to have a difficult time rising up to a better life. If you're told every day that you can't lead, you probably won't even try. But when people believe in you and communicate it repeatedly, you gain confidence and try harder. Nothing erases self-doubt quicker than when a person of influence speaks belief into your life. No wonder Abraham Lincoln said, "I'm a success today because I had a friend who believed in me and I didn't have the heart to let him down."¹¹

"GREAT LEADERS
HELP PEOPLE HAVE
A LARGER VISION
OF THEMSELVES."

—MARK SANBORN

Stop reading for a moment and think of someone you look up to who believes in you, who believes you are a person with potential. Is there someone in your life like that? Now think of how you behave around that person. Doesn't his or her confidence bring out the best in you?

Here is what I know: we will do everything in our power to measure up to the spoken belief we have received. That's why as a leader who develops people, I recognize the importance of my words. I look for opportunities to speak potential into the lives of people, especially leaders. Why? Because when I look back at the high points of my life, I recognize that most of them came when someone important to me spoke words of encouragement into me. Encouragement is oxygen to the soul for the leader, and if you're a leader who wants to develop other leaders, you need to encourage them and help them breathe.

Do you have a way to "farm" talent in your organization, in your department, or on your team? If not, can you start one? People need a place where they can rise up and practice leadership. And are you speaking positively into the lives of people, especially potential leaders? If not, start doing it today.

3. Assets Not on Hand: "Who Has Leadership Potential Outside of the Organization?"

As much as I advocate identifying leaders in your own organization, sometimes you can't find who you're looking for. But bringing in outsiders

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can create challenges because of the unknowns. I think the greatest challenge is cultural compatibility.

I read an article in *Inc.* magazine by David Walker, CEO and cofounder of Triplemint real estate brokerage in New York City.¹² Walker said, “If there’s one thing that keeps every founder up at night, it’s hiring. Hiring the best talent is a massive and never-ending challenge. . . . While every company has a different culture, there are four questions that will help you identify if a candidate is a good culture fit, no matter where your company falls on the culture spectrum.”

Here are his four questions:

1. How did the culture at your last company empower or disempower you?
2. What were the characteristics of the best boss you’ve ever had?
3. Describe how you handled a conflict with one of your coworkers.
4. What kind of feedback do you expect to receive in this role and how often do you expect to receive it?

Here’s what I love about Walker’s approach. Asking the first question helps you understand the culture candidates come from. Asking the second question helps you understand their view of leadership. Asking the third question helps you understand their relational skills. And asking the fourth question helps you understand their expectations regarding feedback.

Walker said, “I’ve made great hires who were a near-perfect culture fit, and I’ve made less-than-stellar hires who ultimately didn’t work out. There is no such thing as batting a thousand with hiring. You’re going to make mistakes no matter how good you are at it.”

When you bring an outsider into your organization, I think it’s important to set expectations with that new hire up front. In my book *Leadershift*, I wrote about the expectations we set for people who join our team. We tell them:

- “It’s not about me—it’s not about you—it’s about the big picture.”
- “You are expected to keep growing.”

- “You must value other people.”
- “Always take responsibility.”
- “We will not avoid tough conversations.”¹³

The more we're on the same page, the better chance we all have of success.

4. Attitude of the Potential Leaders: “Are They Willing?”

Recently, I was having a conversation about hiring with my friend Ed Bastian, the CEO of Delta Airlines. Ed told me, “At Delta, we hire for attitude but train for aptitude. Always start with attitude.” He continued, “Bring people on the team that the other members will enjoy working with.”¹⁴

Attitude is a choice, and at the heart of a good attitude is willingness—willingness to learn, to improve, to serve, to think of others, to add value,

to do the right thing, and to make sacrifices for the team. Leadership skill may come from the head, but leadership attitude comes from the heart.

Good leaders want more *for* the people they lead than they want *from* them. For years I've taught potential leaders that people do not care about how much you know until they know how much you care. That requires leaders to get to know the people they lead and have empathy for them. And as Jeffrey Cohn and Jay Morgan said, “Empathy is critical for leadership for many reasons. Combined with integrity, it drives trust. It gives followers a sense that their interests are being looked

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—ED BASTIAN

after, and this creates positive energy. Followers who sense that a leader appreciates them are motivated to carry out their duties in a more committed way.”¹⁵

IDENTIFYING LEADERS

When potential leaders have the right attitude, you can sense it. When their hearts are right, they have passion that spills out. They have energy. They're positive. They're like the chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, Warren Buffett, who loves what he does so much that he said, "I tap dance to work [every day]."¹⁶ Or like longtime manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers Tommy Lasorda, who won two World Series titles. One night, after a crushing loss to Houston in the 1981 playoffs, Lasorda was undaunted and enthusiastic. When asked about his upbeat attitude, he said, "The best day of my life is when I manage a winning game. The second-best day of my life is when I manage a losing game."¹⁷ That's the kind of attitude you want to see in the potential leaders you select. They believe they can succeed. They're willing to put in the time and effort. Even in the face of defeat, they cheerfully keep working and trying to move forward.

I admire that kind of positive attitude, and I teach it too. But sometimes even the attitude guy needs a little help. In November 2018, I participated in the Rock 'n' Roll Las Vegas Marathon and Half Marathon with my CEO, Mark Cole. Mark is a runner who has completed several marathons, but I'm not. I haven't done much running since I gave up playing basketball in my thirties, and I've had replacement surgeries on both of my knees. But I decided I wanted to take on this race with Mark, as a walker.

This was my first experience in a marathon. I was excited as we got started. If you've ever participated in a big race like this, you know how exhilarating they can be. Tens of thousands of people at the starting line, raring to go. Music playing. Some people dressed in costumes. And the race was at night!

As excited as I was, I have to admit that at about mile ten, my attitude wasn't great. I was physically finished, and I wanted to stop. But I didn't. Why? Because Mark was with me, encouraging me, helping me to keep my attitude positive even when my body was done and my willpower was fleeting. And it was worth it. When we crossed the finish line, I was proud of my accomplishment. I'm guessing not many seventy-one-year-olds were participating in that race. I couldn't have done it without Mark's help.

Let me say one more thing about attitude. Good character is what

holds together all the positive attitude traits I've mentioned—willingness to serve, selflessness, empathy, growth, and sacrifice. Character keeps

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everything secure. Without it, things can break down fast. Character is about managing your life well, so you can lead others well. As Gayle Beebe said, "The formation of our character creates predictability to our leadership. Predictability, dependability and consistency: these three qualities ensure that our leadership is reliable and motivates people to place their confidence in us. Our effectiveness as leaders is built on trust."¹⁸

When potential leaders have the right heart for people, choose to be positive every day, and maintain the good character to help them keep making the right choices, they possess the willingness needed to become better leaders. And they are worth choosing to develop.

5. Ability of the Potential Leaders: "Are They Able?"

I already told you that Ed Bastian says at Delta they believe in hiring for attitude. But that doesn't mean he ignores talent. As he also told me, "We look for talent because talent lifts us." I'd say leadership talent lifts organizations the most.¹⁹

Excellence is impossible in any endeavor without talent. No highly successful organization got to where it is without talent. It isn't possible. Finding good leaders is like finding a good high jumper. It does you no good to find seven people who can jump one foot. You need one person who can jump seven feet. Leadership is too difficult and complex to be done by a committee of average people. The more difficult the situation, the higher the leaders must be able to "jump."

There is a saying that a person's gift makes room for him or her. Poet Ralph Waldo Emerson expressed a similar idea when he wrote, "Each man has his own vocation. The talent is the call. There is one direction in which all space is open to him."²⁰ The direction that has space for each

of us is in our area of talent and giftedness. Not only are we able in that area—we are capable of more.

How do you know potential leaders are gifted in a particular area?

- They will be good at it—that displays excellence.
- They will have opportunities to use it—that creates expansion.
- They will draw other people to them—that shows attraction.
- They will enjoy doing it—that brings fulfillment.

Potential leaders with talent have the potential to lift the whole organization through excellence and expand the organization through opportunity. That is a powerful combination, because, as Nobel laureate Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn observed, “Talent is always conscious of its own abundance and does not object to sharing.”²¹

6. Accomplishments of the Potential Leaders: “Have They Produced Results?”

The final area you need to examine when it comes to potential leaders has to do with their accomplishments. You need to look at whether they have produced results in the past. What have they achieved? When given a task, do they complete it with excellence? Do they meet and exceed goals? Do they deliver? If they can produce results for themselves, they have the potential to help other people succeed. They can’t lead others to success if they’ve never led themselves there.

Good leaders come in all sizes, shapes, ages, and backgrounds. Their personalities are different, and they don’t all lead the same way. However, people with the most leadership potential stand out from other people who are average because they know how to win. They are able to build something of value with the help of others.

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—ALEKSANDR
SOLZHENITSYN

THE LEADER'S GREATEST RETURN

When I talk about builders, I mean people who share five characteristics:

Builders Love Results

Thomas Edison is reputed to have said, "There ain't no rules around here. We are trying to accomplish something."²² That's the mind-set of a builder!

Paul Martinelli, president of the John Maxwell Team, is a builder. He has taken the idea of training people to be coaches and speakers and built it into an organization that has trained more than twenty thousand men and women in more than 140 countries. And he keeps building. His favorite time of year comes when he hosts a year-end meeting with his staff so they can examine the past year, plan the next, and improve everything they do. Builders are producers.

Builders Are Seldom Satisfied

Builders don't get comfortable. They live the Law of the Rubber Band, which I taught in *The 15 Invaluable Laws of Growth*.²³ It says growth stops when you lose the tension between where you are and where you could be. Builders like to be stretched. Or as former Indy race car driver Mario Andretti said, "If everything seems under control, you're just not going fast enough."²⁴

Builders Are Comfortable with Uncertainty

Change is constant and essential to progress, and change brings uncertainty. Builders make themselves comfortable with that. They know there are times when they must take steps forward without knowing all the answers or with limited information. But they move forward just the same, believing there is an answer, they can figure it out, and progress will result. After all, uncertainty is a leadership opportunity. The more uncertainty there is, the greater the need for good leaders to find the way and take others with them. Builders constantly seek ways to open doors and keep growing. They recognize that when nothing is 100 percent certain, anything is possible.

Builders Are Impatient

There are two kinds of progress in our world. There are things you have to work for and things you have to wait for. Builders excel in the progress that comes from working. Like me, they see patience as a minor form of despair, disguised as a virtue. I know I need more patience. Do you know where I might be able to take a crash course to get it?

Maybe I come by impatience naturally. My father, Melvin Maxwell, who's in his nineties, has always been a builder and shows few signs of patience. Not long ago my sister Trish took my dad and his car to get an oil change. The place was very busy, and it was taking longer than he expected. Trish told me that for the first thirty minutes, Dad was fine. But then he began pacing, and soon he was repeatedly asking, "How much longer will this take?" Finally, when he could handle it no more, he took Trish's arm and said, "Come on. Let's go *buy* a car. That will be faster!"

My friend Chris Hodges says that the vision gap is the space between what we *are* doing and what we *could* do. Builders are impatient to close that gap.

Builders Are Contagious

Recently the John Maxwell Team committed to begin training people in Poland, and Iwona Polkowska, one of our coaches from Poland, set up a launch call. A few minutes before the call, she and I were talking, and she told me there would be more than a thousand people on the call. I was impressed and congratulated her, but Iwona was not impressed. She said, "It's a start. You know there are thirty-eight million people in Poland." That got me excited, and I could see that Iwona was going to spread the word in her country about how the training could add value to people.

Builders are passionate about what they are doing and where they are going. And their passion inspires others to join them. Their can-do

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spirit spreads. Is there not enough time? They will find the time. Is there not enough money? They will find the money. Are there not enough people? They will find the people. How do they do it? By inspiring others to join and help them.

The bottom line for builders is that they always *build* something. They don't just talk about it. They are accomplished, and their track record is a great indicator of their future performance—and it qualifies them to try to lead others successfully.

NO TEAM CAN WIN WITHOUT GREAT PLAYERS

Red Auerbach, who was the longtime president of the NBA's Boston Celtics, said, "How you select people is more important than how you manage them once they're on the job. If you start with the right people, you won't have problems later on. If you hire the wrong people, for whatever reason, you're in serious trouble and all the revolutionary management techniques in the world won't bail you out."²⁵ The only way to have a great team is to identify and find the right players.

In the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned that my friend Bob Taylor has a particular skill for identifying the best wood for his guitars. It's something he developed as he grew from a hobbyist guitar builder in high school to a full-time builder in his twenties to the cofounder of a company that now manufactures 40 percent of all acoustic guitars in the United States. But Bob is also an excellent leader. He couldn't have built the company he has if he weren't. And a few years ago, as Bob entered his late fifties, he realized he needed to start looking for a successor. His long-time guitar codesigner, Larry Breedlove, had retired, and Bob realized that without someone to take over for him, Taylor Guitars would not be able to keep growing and improving and building guitars for future generations.

Bob's desire was to find someone better than he was at building guitars—and he is the guy who revolutionized the way acoustic guitars

IDENTIFYING LEADERS

are made and amplified. That meant he couldn't promote somebody from within the Taylor factory. He needed someone who could be innovative and come up with ideas better than his. Bob believes that someone who has done the work to figure out something all on his own understands it much more deeply than someone who has been taught.²⁶

So, one day Bob sat down and wrote out who he was looking for. During an interview with Tony Polecastro, here's what Bob said he wrote:

"Dear God, I need one guitar maker who is a better guitar builder than me, who's self-taught, that didn't learn how to do it by working in another factory, who's a pro player and can play with anybody at the drop of a hat, you know, could be onstage with the best of them, who's a great person, who won't get into this fifteen years and then screw up his life and we have to start all over, you know, who knows the history of guitars, knows how to make guitars"—I mean, I wrote all these things down. . . . "He needs to have twenty years of experience and be less than thirty years old. . . . Oh, yeah, and he's gotta be from San Diego."²⁷

Bob admitted that his list was impossible. The person didn't exist. Yet Bob found him. His name is Andy Powers. Bob met him because Andy was playing guitar for professional recording artist Jason Mraz at the Taylor Guitars booth at the NAMM show, the world's largest trade show in the music industry. Bob soon got to know Andy, and one day, after spending an afternoon with him, Bob's list, which had sat in a drawer for more than a year, popped into his head as he was driving home. And Bob realized that Andy met *every* criterion on his list, right down to living in northern San Diego County. And, remarkably, even though Andy was only twenty-eight, he had been building real guitars since the age of eight. Bob calls it a modern-day miracle. He had found the leader of the future for Taylor Guitars.

Andy recounted what Bob soon told him. Bob said:

"So here's the deal." He's like, "I won't be here forever, and I want Taylor to be a guitar company that's still guitar-maker driven, and I want it

THE LEADER'S GREATEST RETURN

to be a first-generation company. . . . Once I'm gone, who's the guitar maker here?" So, he kind of just said, "Look, I've looked the world over and it's like, you're my guitar maker. So, you can take as much time, take two weeks to decide, take two years. I don't care. It's like it's either you or nobody."²⁸

Andy accepted Bob's offer, closed his high-end custom guitar-building shop, and became a part of Taylor Guitars in 2011. And he is Bob's heir apparent. "I'm completely confident in turning everything over to him," said Bob. "Andy Powers is the best guitar maker I've ever met in my life."²⁹

Not only has Andy's entrance into Taylor Guitars set up the future of the organization, but it has already monumentally improved the guitars Taylor makes. "To me, the thing that I can offer the customers we have and the new customers that are coming is someone who, as much as they love guitars, Andy loves them more. I feel like the next generation is going to see some of the best guitars that the guitar industry has ever made, and that Andy is going to be one of the most important guitar figures in the history of guitars."³⁰ On top of everything else, having Andy as a leader at Taylor has freed up Bob to travel the world to promote old-forest conservation and new-forest cultivation.

"I'm not into the 'name it and claim it' type of philosophy," said Bob, "but I am into 'if you write down some of the things you want sometimes, you see it when it's standing right in front of you.' Otherwise, you might not even notice that."³¹

How did Bob do it? First, he started by knowing *exactly* who he was looking for. And he followed the same pattern I outlined in this chapter:

1. **ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS:** "What is needed?"
2. **ASSETS ON HAND:** "Who has leadership potential within the organization?"
3. **ASSETS NOT ON HAND:** "Who has leadership potential outside of the organization?"

IDENTIFYING LEADERS

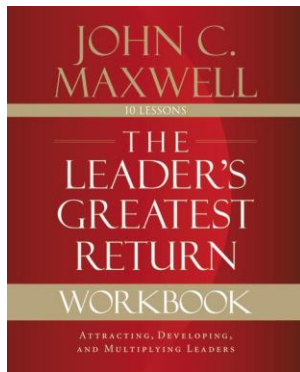
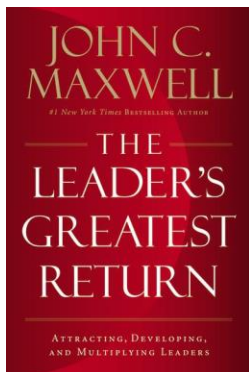
4. ATTITUDE OF THE POTENTIAL LEADERS: “Are they willing?”
5. ABILITY OF THE POTENTIAL LEADERS: “Are they able?”
6. ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE POTENTIAL LEADERS: “Have they produced results?”

You cannot find something or someone when you don't know what you're looking for. People often say, “I'll know it when I see it.” That's not a good strategy. I say, *Know it and you'll see it!*

Bob knew exactly what he needed, even to the point of writing it down in detail. And when he found the person, he made him a part of Taylor Guitars.

No matter what kind of team, department, or organization you lead, you can follow this same process. You *need* to follow this same process because everything rises and falls on leadership. If you're not identifying the leaders of tomorrow whom you will train up, your potential and your future will always be limited.

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THE LEADER'S GREATEST RETURN

by John C. Maxwell

What is the greatest return on a leader's time?

After leaders have invested in their own leadership growth, what is the best way to accomplish their vision and grow their organizations? Develop leaders! The more leaders an organization has and the better equipped they are to lead, the more successful the organization and all its leaders.

In *The Leader's Greatest Return*, Maxwell shares the most important lessons he's learned about the leadership development process over the last quarter century. He instructs readers in how to:

- Recognize potential leaders
- Attract leaders by creating a leadership "table"
- Work themselves out of a job by equipping and empowering leaders
- Position leaders to build a winning team
- Coach leaders to higher levels and make them leadership developers themselves

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