JOHN C. MAXWELL

THE 21 INDISPENSABLE QUALITIES OF A LEADER

Becoming the Person Others Will Want to Follow

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NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO BEIJING

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INTRODUCTION

What makes people want to follow a leader? Why do people reluctantly comply with one leader while passionately following another to the ends of the earth? What separates leadership theorists from successful leaders who lead effectively in the real world? The answer lies in the character qualities of the individual person.

My friend, do you know whether you have what it takes to become a great leader, the kind who attracts people and makes things happen? I mean, if you took the time to really look at yourself deep down, would you find the qualities needed to live out your boldest dreams, the ones so big that you've never shared them with anybody? That's a question each of us must have the courage to honestly ask—and answer—if we want to achieve our real potential.

I've written this book to help you recognize, develop, and refine the personal characteristics needed to be a truly effective leader, the kind people *want* to follow. If you've already read *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, then you understand that becoming a leader takes time. The Law of Process says that leadership develops daily, not in a day. Part of a leader's development comes from learning the laws of leadership, for those are the tools that teach how leadership works. But *understanding* leadership and actually *doing* it are two different activities.

Recently I talked to a friend named Bill Freeman. He is the president of Watkins Associated Industries, Inc., the largest privately owned trucking company in America. Bill is an excellent executive, and like all good leaders, he is continually looking for ways to learn and grow.

"I'm about halfway through your book," he told me, meaning *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. "It's making quite an impact on me." Then he said something that made quite an impact on *me*. "Let me tell you how I'm going through it," he said. "Each morning I read a chapter of the book. And all through the day, I think about that law. As I work, I look at myself and ask, How am I doing with this leadership law? I watch the people in the

office, looking to see whether they practice it. I measure our whole company against it, observing, assessing, reflecting. Every morning it's a different law. It's an eye-opener."

Bill really got my juices flowing. In fact, his comments prompted me to write this book. He is approaching his own leadership development from the inside out, as he should. Leaders are effective because of who they are on the inside—in the qualities that make them up as people. And to go to the highest level of leadership, people have to develop these traits from the inside out.

After talking to Bill, I took some time to reflect on the characteristics of the best leaders I know, the ones who people really want to follow. I looked for common themes. I talked to other leaders and heard their impressions. And I examined leaders who have impacted history. I settled on a list of 21 qualities possessed by all great leaders. These traits are described and illustrated in this book, meant to be a complementary companion to *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*.

As you dive into the book, you may find that you are able to easily breeze through several chapters at a time. You may even be able to knock out the whole book in one sitting. *Don't do it*. *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* is designed to be absorbed the same way Bill Freeman approaches a book: strategically and methodically.

I want to encourage you to live with this book for a while. Read a chapter, and then give it some time. Use it to reflect, review, and renew. If the quality you're studying is a weak area in your life, spend some time addressing it before you move on to the next chapter. You may even want to repeat this process several times over the course of a year, cementing each trait into your character.

Everything rises and falls on leadership. And leadership truly develops from the inside out. If you can become the leader you *ought* to be on the *inside*, you will be able to become the leader you *want* to be on the *outside*. People will want to follow you. And when that happens, you'll be able to tackle anything in this world.

1 CHARACTER : BE A PIECE OF THE ROCK

Leadership is the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose and the character which inspires confidence.

—Bernard Montgomery,
British Field Marshal

Never “for the sake of peace and quiet” deny your own experience or convictions.

—Dag Hammarskjöld,
Statesman and Nobel Peace Prize Winner

PUTTING IT ALL ON THE LINE

If you’ve traveled through smaller airports or have much experience flying in corporate aircraft, you’ve probably seen or flown in a Lear Jet. I’ve had the opportunity to fly in one a couple of times, and it’s quite an experience. They’re small—capable of carrying only five or six passengers—and very fast. It’s like climbing into a narrow tube with jet engines strapped to it.

I have to admit, the whole experience of riding in a Lear Jet is pretty exhilarating. But by far the most amazing thing to me about it is the time it saves. I’ve traveled literally millions of miles on airlines, and I’m accustomed to long drives to airports, car rental returns, shuttles, terminal congestion, and seemingly endless delays. It can be a nightmare. Flying on a Lear Jet can easily cut travel time in half.

The father of this amazing airplane was a man named Bill Lear. An inventor, aviator, and business leader, Lear held more than 150 patents, including those of the automatic pilot, car radio, and eight-track tapes (you can’t win them all). Lear was a pioneer in his thinking, and in the 1950s, he could see the potential for the manufacture of small corporate jets. It took him several years to make his dream a reality, but in 1963, the first Lear Jet made its maiden voyage, and in 1964 he delivered his first production jet to a client.

Lear's success was immediate, and he quickly sold many aircraft. But not long after he got his start, Lear learned that two aircraft he'd built had crashed under mysterious circumstances. He was devastated. At that time, fifty-five Lear Jets were privately owned, and Lear immediately sent word to all of the owners to ground their planes until he and his team could determine what had caused the crashes. The thought that more lives might be lost was far more important to him than any adverse publicity that action might generate in the media.

As he researched the ill-fated flights, Lear discovered a potential cause, but he couldn't verify the technical problem on the ground. There was only one sure way to find out whether he had diagnosed the problem correctly. He would have to try to recreate it personally— in the air.

It was a dangerous process, but that's what he did. As he flew the jet, he nearly lost control and almost met the same fate as the other two pilots. But he did manage to make it through the tests, and he was able to verify the defect. Lear developed a new part to correct the problem and fitted all fifty-five planes with it, eliminating the danger.

Grounding the planes cost Lear a lot of money. And it planted seeds of doubt in the minds of potential customers. As a result, he needed two years to rebuild the business. But Lear never regretted his decision. He was willing to risk his success, his fortune, and even his life to solve the mystery of those crashes—but not his integrity. And that takes character.

FLESHING IT OUT

How a leader deals with the circumstances of life tells you many things about his character. Crisis doesn't necessarily make character, but it certainly does reveal it. Adversity is a crossroads that makes a person choose one of two paths: character or compromise. Every time he chooses character, he becomes stronger, even if that choice brings negative consequences. As Nobel prize– winning author Alexander Solzhenitsyn noted, "The meaning of earthly existing lies, not as we have grown used to thinking, in prospering, but in the development of the soul." The development of character is at the heart of our development not just as

leaders, but as human beings.

What must every person know about character?

1. *Character Is More than Talk*

Anyone can *say* that he has integrity, but action is the real indicator of character. Your character determines who you are. Who you are determines what you see. What you see determines what you do. That's why you can never separate a leader's character from his actions. If a leader's actions and intentions are continually working against each other, then look to his character to find out why.

2. *Talent Is a Gift, but Character Is a Choice*

We have no control over a lot of things in life. We don't get to choose our parents. We don't select the location or circumstances of our birth and upbringing. We don't get to pick our talents or IQ. But we do choose our character. In fact, we create it every time we make choices—to cop out or dig out of a hard situation, to bend the truth or stand under the weight of it, to take the easy money or pay the price. As you live your life and make choices today, you are continuing to create your character.

3. *Character Brings Lasting Success with People*

True leadership always involves other people. (As the leadership proverb says, if you think you're leading and no one is following you, then you're only taking a walk.) Followers do not trust leaders whose character they know to be flawed, and they will not continue following them.

4. *Leaders Cannot Rise Above the Limitations of Their Character*

Have you ever seen highly talented people suddenly fall apart when they achieved a certain level of success? The key to that phenomenon is character. Steven Berglas, a psychologist at Harvard Medical School and author of *The Success Syndrome,* says that people who achieve great heights but lack the bedrock character to sustain them through the stress are headed for disaster. He believes they are destined for one or more of the four A's: *arrogance,* painful feelings of *aloneness,* destructive *adventure-*

seeking, or *adultery*. Each is a terrible price to pay for weak character.

REFLECTING ON IT

If you've found yourself being sucked in by one of the four A's that Berglas identifies, call a time-out. Do what you must to step away from some of the stress of your success, and seek professional help. Don't think that the valley you're in will pass with time, more money, or increased prestige. Unaddressed cracks in character only get deeper and more destructive with time.

If you're not struggling in any of these four areas, you should still examine the condition of your character. Ask yourself whether your words and actions match—all the time. When you say you'll finish an assignment, do you always follow through? If you tell your children that you'll make it to their recital or ball game, are you there for it? Can people trust your handshake as they would a legal contract?

As you lead others at home, at work, and in the community, recognize that your character is your most important asset. G. Alan Bernard, president of Mid Park, Inc., stated, "The respect that leadership must have requires that one's ethics be without question. A leader not only stays above the line between right and wrong, he stays well clear of the 'gray areas.'"

BRINGING IT HOME

To improve your character, do the following:

- *Search for the cracks.* Spend some time looking at the major areas of your life (work, marriage, family, service, etc.), and identify anywhere you might have cut corners, compromised, or let people down. Write down every instance you can recall from the past two months.

- *Look for patterns.* Examine the responses that you just wrote down. Is there a

particular area where you have a weakness, or do you have a type of problem that keeps surfacing? Detectable patterns will help you diagnose character issues.

• *Face the music.* The beginning of character repair comes when you face your flaws, apologize, and deal with the consequences of your actions. Create a list of people to whom you need to apologize for your actions, then follow through with sincere apologies.

•*Rebuild.* It's one thing to face up to your past actions. It's another to build a new future. Now that you've identified any areas of weakness, create a plan that will prevent you from making the same mistakes again.

DAILY TAKE-AWAY

A man took his young daughter to a carnival, and she immediately ran over to a booth and asked for cotton candy. As the attendant handed her a huge ball of it, the father asked, "Sweetheart, are you sure you can eat all that?"

"Don't worry, Dad," she answered, "I'm a lot bigger on the inside than on the outside."

That's what real character is—being bigger on the inside.

2 CHARISMA : THE FIRST IMPRESSION CAN SEAL THE DEAL

How can you have charisma? Be more concerned about making others feel good about themselves than you are making them feel good about you.

—Dan Reiland,
Executive Pastor at 12 Stone Church in Lawrenceville, Georgia

I have yet to find the man, however exalted his station, who did not do better work and put forth greater effort under a spirit of approval than under a spirit of criticism.

—Charles Schwab, Industrialist

THE CLEVEREST IN ENGLAND

During the second half of the nineteenth century, two strong men vied for leadership of Great Britain's government: William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli. The two politicians were intense rivals. You can detect how they felt about each other based on a comment once made by Disraeli: "The difference between a misfortune and a calamity? If Gladstone fell into the Thames [River], it would be a misfortune. But if someone dragged him out again, it would be a calamity."

Many people believe that Gladstone, leader of the Liberal Party for three decades, personified the best qualities of Victorian England. A career public servant, he was a great orator, a master of finance, and a staunchly moral man. He was made prime minister of the United Kingdom four different times, the only person in the nation's history to achieve that honor. Under his leadership, Great Britain established a national education system, instituted parliamentary reform, and saw the vote given to a significant number of people in the working classes.

Benjamin Disraeli, who served twice as prime minister, had a different kind of background. In his thirties, he entered politics and built a reputation

as a diplomat and social reformer. But his greatest accomplishment was masterminding Great Britain's purchase of shares in the Suez Canal.

Though both men accomplished much for Britain, what really separated them as leaders was their approach to people. The difference can be best illustrated by a story told by a young woman who dined with the two rival statesmen on consecutive nights. When asked her impression of them, she said, "When I left the dining room after sitting next to Mr. Gladstone, I thought he was the cleverest *man* in England. But after sitting next to Mr. Disraeli, I thought I was the cleverest *woman* in England." Disraeli possessed a quality that drew people to him and made them want to follow him. He had charisma.

FLESHING IT OUT

Most people think of charisma as something mystical, almost undefinable. They think it's a quality that comes at birth or not at all. But that's not true. Charisma, plainly stated, is the ability to draw people to you. And like other character traits, it can be developed.

To make yourself the kind of person who attracts others, you need to personify these pointers:

1. Love Life

People enjoy leaders who enjoy life. Think of the people you want to spend time with. How would you describe them? Grumpy? Bitter? Depressed? Of course not. They're celebrators, not complainers. They're passionate about life. If you want to attract people, you need to be like the people you enjoy being with. Eighteenth-century evangelist John Wesley recognized that, saying, "when you set yourself on fire, people love to come and see you burn."

2. Put a "10" on Every Person's Head

One of the best things you can do for people—which also attracts them to you—is to expect the best of them. I call it putting a "10" on everyone's

head. It helps others think more highly of themselves, and at the same time, it also helps you. According to Jacques Wiesel, “A survey of one hundred self-made millionaires showed only one common denominator. These highly successful men and women could only see the good in people.”

Benjamin Disraeli understood and practiced this concept, and it was one of the secrets of his charisma. He once said, “The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own.” If you appreciate others, encourage them, and help them reach their potential, they will love you for it.

3. Give People Hope

French General Napoleon Bonaparte characterized leaders as “dealers in hope.” Like all great leaders, he knew that hope is the greatest of all possessions. If you can be the person who bestows that gift on others, they will be attracted to you, and they will be forever grateful.

4. Share Yourself

People love leaders who share themselves and their life journeys. As you lead people, give of yourself. Share wisdom, resources, and even special occasions. That’s one of my favorite things to do. For example, I recently went to an annual storytelling festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee. It was something I had wanted to do for years, and when I was finally able to work it into my schedule, my wife, Margaret, and I took two leaders from my staff and their wives. We had a wonderful time, and more important, I was able to add value to their lives by spending special time with them.

When it comes to charisma, the bottom line is other mindedness. Leaders who think about others and their concerns before thinking of themselves exhibit charisma.

REFLECTING ON IT

How would you rate yourself when it comes to charisma? Are other people

naturally attracted to you? Are you well liked? If not, you may possess one of these roadblocks to charisma:

Pride. Nobody wants to follow a leader who thinks he is better than everyone else.

Insecurity. If you are uncomfortable with who you are, others will be too.

Moodiness. If people never know what to expect from you, they stop expecting anything.

Perfectionism. People respect the desire for excellence, but dread totally unrealistic expectations.

Cynicism. People don't want to be rained on by someone who sees a cloud around every silver lining.

If you can stay away from these qualities, you can cultivate charisma.

BRINGING IT HOME

To improve your charisma, do the following:

•*Change your focus.* Observe your interaction with people during the next few days. As you talk to others, determine how much of your conversation is concentrated on yourself. Determine to tip the balance in favor of focusing on others.

•*Play the first impression game.* Try an experiment. The next time you meet someone for the first time, try your best to make a good impression. Learn the person's name. Focus on his interests. Be positive. And most important, treat him as a "10." If you can do this for a day, you can do it every day. And that will increase your charisma overnight.

•*Share yourself.* Make it your long-term goal to share your resources with others. Think about how you can add value to five people in your life this year. They can be family members, colleagues, employees, or friends. Provide resources to help them grow personally and professionally, and share your personal journey with them.

DAILY TAKE-AWAY

Perle Mesta, the greatest Washington hostess since Dolley Madison, was asked the secret of her success in getting so many rich and famous people to attend her parties.

"It's all in the greetings and good-byes," she replied. When a guest arrived, she met him, saying, "At last you're here!" and as each left, she said, "I'm sorry you have to leave so soon!" Her agenda was to focus on others, not herself. That's charisma.

Demo version limitation

4 COMMUNICATION : WITHOUT IT YOU TRAVEL ALONE

Developing excellent communication skills is absolutely essential to effective leadership. The leader must be able to share knowledge and ideas to transmit a sense of urgency and enthusiasm to others. If a leader can't get a message across clearly and motivate others to act on it, then having a message doesn't even matter.

—Gilbert Amelio,
President and CEO of National Semiconductor Corp.

Educators take something simple and make it complicated. Communicators take something complicated and make it simple.

—John C. Maxwell

A GREAT COMMUNICATOR IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

Many American presidents have made an impact on our country as great communicators. John F. Kennedy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln come to mind as outstanding examples. But only one president in our lifetime was called the Great Communicator, and that was Ronald Reagan.

Flashes of Reagan's talent for communication revealed themselves early in his career. He started out in radio. In his early twenties, Reagan quickly became one of the best-known announcers in the Midwest. He usually announced games live, but occasionally he would simulate the broadcast of a Chicago Cubs game using Western Union reports of each play. During one such game, the wire went dead while Augie Galan was at bat in a tough situation. Reagan deftly kept Galan fouling off pitch after imaginary pitch for *six minutes* until he could pick up the play-by-play again.

Throughout his career, Reagan displayed an uncommon ability to connect and communicate with people. Nowhere was that more evident than during

his time leading up to and in the White House. While announcing his run for the presidency in 1980, he cast the vision for his campaign clearly and simply, saying, “At the heart of our message should be five simple familiar words. No big economic theories. No sermons on political philosophy. Just five short words: *family, work, neighborhood, freedom, peace*.”

During his campaign, Reagan successfully debated incumbent Jimmy Carter. The former California governor came across as a relaxed, likable, competent middle American. He won easily. Afterward when asked if he had been nervous debating the president, Reagan answered, “No, not at all. I’ve been on the same stage with John Wayne.”

Whether he was speaking to a group, looking into a camera, or connecting with someone one-on-one, Reagan was able to communicate with maximum effectiveness. Even when he was shot and was being wheeled into the operating room, his goal was to put others at ease. His comment to the surgeons was, “Please assure me that you are all Republicans.”

Reagan was a good executive because he possessed a clear vision, made decisions easily, and delegated very effectively. But he was a great leader because of his uncanny ability to communicate. When it came to leading the country, people knew who he was, where he stood, and what he wanted, and they couldn’t wait to get on board with him. Communication made him the kind of leader that people wanted to follow.

FLESHING IT OUT

Even if you don’t have your sights set on leading the country, as Ronald Reagan did, you still need to possess the ability to communicate. The success of your marriage, job, and personal relationships depends greatly on it. People will not follow you if they don’t know what you want or where you are going.

You can be a more effective communicator if you follow four basic truths.

1. Simplify Your Message

Communication is not just *what* you say. It's also how you say it. Contrary to what some educators teach, the key to effective communication is simplicity. Forget about impressing people with big words or complex sentences. If you want to connect with people, keep it simple. Napoleon Bonaparte used to tell his secretaries, "Be clear, be clear, be clear."

A story about a junior executive gives a blueprint for effective communication. The young man was invited to speak to a large group for the first time, so he approached his mentor for advice about giving a good speech. The older man said, "Write an exciting opening that will grab everybody in your audience. Then you write a dramatic summary and closing that will make the people want to act. Then put them as close together as possible."

2. See the Person

Effective communicators focus on the people with whom they're communicating. They know it is impossible to effectively communicate to an audience without knowing something about them.

As you communicate with people—whether individuals or groups—ask yourself these questions: Who is my audience? What are their questions? What needs to be accomplished? And how much time do I have? If you want to become a better communicator, become audience oriented. People believe in great communicators because great communicators believe in people.

3. Show the Truth

Credibility precedes great communication. There are two ways to convey credibility to your audience. First, believe in what you say. Ordinary people become extraordinary communicators when they are fired up with conviction. Field Marshal Ferdinand Foch observed, "The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire." Second, live what you say. There is no greater credibility than conviction in action.

4. Seek a Response

As you communicate, never forget that the goal of all communication is action. If you dump a bunch of information on people, you're not communicating. Every time you speak to people, give them something to feel, something to remember, and something to do. If you're successful in doing that, your ability to lead others will go to a new level.

REFLECTING ON IT

Danto Manquez Jr., president of MVM, Inc., has spoken to the issue of a leader's ability to communicate: "A leader must get things done through others, therefore the leader must have the ability to inspire and motivate, guide and direct, and listen. It's only through communication that the leader is able to cause others to internalize his or her vision and implement it."

How do you rate your ability to communicate with others? Is communication a priority for you? Can you inspire and motivate people? Do you express your vision in such a way that your people are able to understand, internalize, and implement it? When you talk to people one-on-one, are you able to connect with them? How about with groups? If you know in your heart that your vision is great, yet people still do not buy into it, your problem may be an inability to communicate effectively.

BRINGING IT HOME

To improve your communication, do the following:

•*Be clear as a bell.* Examine a letter, memo, or other item you've recently written. Are your sentences short and direct, or do they meander? Will your readers be able to grasp the words you've chosen, or will they have to scramble for a dictionary? Have you used the fewest words possible? To a communicator, your best friends are simplicity and clarity. Write your next piece of communication keeping both in mind.

• *Refocus your attention.* During the coming week, pay attention to your focus when you communicate. Is it on you, your material, or your audience? If it's not on people, you need to change it. Think about their needs, questions, and desires. Meet people where they are, and you will be a better communicator.

•*Live your message.* Are there any discrepancies between what you communicate and what you do? Talk to a few trustworthy people and ask them whether you are living your message. Your spouse, a mentor, or a close friend may be able to see things that you are blind to. Receive their comments without defensiveness. Then purpose to make changes in your life to be more consistent.

DAILY TAKE-AWAY

On April 7, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln made a burdensome decision, and he needed to communicate it to his general in the field. On it rested all his hopes and the entire weight of his leadership as president. Using all his considerable skill as a communicator, he wrote the following message:

Lieut. Gen. Grant,
Gen. Sheridan says, "If the thing is pressed, I think that Lee will surrender." Let the thing be pressed.

A. Lincoln

The president didn't allow the importance of a piece of communication to complicate its simplicity. Neither should we.

5 COMPETENCE : IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

Competence goes beyond words. It's the leader's ability to say it, plan it, and do it in such a way that others know that you know how— and know that they want to follow you.

—John C. Maxwell

The society which scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water.

—John Gardner, Author

FANFARE FOR A COMMON MAN

Benjamin Franklin always thought of himself as an ordinary citizen. One of seventeen children, Franklin was the son of a tradesman, a candle maker, who was far from wealthy. He experienced a typical childhood. He attended school for only two years, and at age twelve, he was apprenticed to his brother in the printing trade.

Franklin worked hard and lived a simple life, governing his actions according to a set of thirteen virtues, upon which he graded himself daily. At age twenty he started his own printing business. Had Franklin been content to work at his trade, his name would be little more than a footnote in Philadelphia's history. Yet he lived an extraordinary life. He was one of the fathers of American independence and a great leader of the emerging nation. He coauthored the Declaration of Independence, and he later helped write the Treaty of Paris and the Constitution of the United States. (He was the only man who signed all three.) And he was selected to perform a difficult and dangerous secret diplomatic mission to Paris during the war to secure military and financial support for the Revolution.

What gave a northern tradesman the opportunity to exert so much

influence among the wealthy, predominately southern landholders who headed the war for independence? I believe it was Franklin's incredible competence.

Benjamin Franklin excelled at everything he touched for seven decades. When he started his own printing business in 1726, people believed Philadelphia could not support a third printer, but Franklin quickly established a reputation as the most skilled and industrious printer in town. But the Philadelphia tradesman wasn't content with only that accomplishment.

Franklin's mind was curious, and he continually sought ways to improve himself and others. He expanded into publishing, his work including the noted *Poor Richard's Almanack*. He did extensive experiments with electricity and coined many of the terms still associated with its use. He invented numerous items such as the potbellied stove, the catheter, and bifocals. And when he traveled frequently across the Atlantic Ocean, he took it upon himself to chart the Gulf Stream. His attitude toward life could be seen in an aphorism he wrote for his almanac: "Hide not your talents. They for use were made. What's a sundial in the shade?"

The evidences of Franklin's talents were many. He helped establish Philadelphia's first library. He started the nation's first fire department. He developed the concept of daylight saving time. And he held many posts serving the government.

For the most part, Franklin was recognized for his ability. But sometimes he had to let his competence speak for itself. During a time when he was working on improvements in agriculture, he discovered that plaster made grains and grasses grow better, but he had a difficult time convincing his neighbors about the discovery. His solution? When spring arrived, he went to a field close to a path, dug out some letters into the dirt with his hands, put plaster into the ruts, and then sowed seed over the whole area. As people passed that way in following weeks, they could see green letters growing brighter than the rest of the field. They said simply, "This has been plastered." People got the message.

FLESHING IT OUT

We all admire people who display high competence, whether they are precision craftsmen, world-class athletes, or successful business leaders. But the truth is that you don't have to be Fabergé, Michael Jordan, or Bill Gates to excel in the area of competence. If you want to cultivate that quality, here's what you need to do.

1. Show Up Every Day

There's a saying, "All things come to him who waits." Unfortunately sometimes it's just the leftovers from the people who got there first. Responsible people show up when they're expected. But highly competent people take it a step farther. They don't show up in body only. They come ready to play every day—no matter how they feel, what kind of circumstances they face, or how difficult they expect the game to be.

2. Keep Improving

Like Benjamin Franklin, all highly competent people continually search for ways to keep learning, growing, and improving. They do that by asking *why*. After all, the person who knows *how* will always have a job, but the person who knows *why* will always be the boss.

3. Follow Through with Excellence

I've never met a person I considered competent who didn't follow through. I bet it's the same for you. Willa A. Foster remarked, "Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives."

Performing at a high level of excellence is always a choice, an act of the will. As leaders, we expect our people to follow through when we hand them the ball. They expect that and a whole lot more from us as their leaders.

4. Accomplish More than Expected

Highly competent people always go the extra mile. For them, good enough is never good enough. In *Men in Mid-Life Crisis,* Jim Conway writes that

some people feel “a weakening of the need to be a great man and an increasing feeling of ‘let’s just get through this the best way we can.’ Never mind hitting home runs. Let’s just get through the ball game without getting beaned.” Leaders cannot afford to have that kind of attitude. They need to do the job, and then some, day in and day out.

5. *Inspire Others*

Highly competent leaders do more than perform at a high level. They inspire and motivate their people to do the same. While some people rely on relational skills alone to survive, effective leaders combine these skills with high competence to take their organizations to new levels of excellence and influence.

REFLECTING ON IT

Where do you stand when it comes to getting the job done? Do you attack everything you do with fervor and perform at the highest level possible? Or is good enough sometimes good enough for you?

When you think about people who are competent, you’re really considering only three types of people:

1. Those who can see what needs to happen.

2. Those who can make it happen.

3. Those who can make things happen when it really counts.

When it comes to your profession, where do you consistently perform? Are you a thinker, a doer, or a clutch player? The better you are, the greater potential for influence you will have with your people.

BRINGING IT HOME

To improve your competence, do the following:

• *Get your head in the game*. If you've been mentally or emotionally detached from your work, it's time to reengage. First, rededicate yourself to your job. Determine to give it an appropriate amount of your undivided attention. Second, figure out why you have been detached. Do you need new challenges? Are you in conflict with your boss or coworkers? Are you in a dead-end job? Identify the source of the problem, and create a plan to resolve it.

•*Redefine the standard.* If you're not performing at a consistently high level, reexamine your standards. Are you shooting too low? Do you cut corners? If so, hit your mental reset button, and outline more demanding expectations for yourself.

•*Find three ways to improve.* Nobody keeps improving without being intentional about it. Do a little research to find three things you can do to improve your professional skills. Then dedicate the time and money to follow through on them.

DAILY TAKE-AWAY

I read an editorial in *Texas Business* not long ago that said, "We are truly the lost generation, huffing and puffing down the fast track to nowhere, always looking to the dollar sign for direction. That's the only standard we recognize. We have no built-in beliefs, no ethical boundaries."

You're only as good as your private standards. When was the last time you gave a task your absolute best even though nobody but you would know about it?

Demo version limitation

7 DISCERNMENT : PUT AN END TO UNSOLVED MYSTERIES

Smart leaders believe only half of what they hear. Discerning leaders know *which* half to believe.

—John C. Maxwell

The first rule of holes: When you're in one, stop digging.

—Molly Ivins, Columnist

ALWAYS AT THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Marya Sklodowska always wanted to get to the heart of things. As a child growing up in Poland, she loved school and learning. When her parents lost their teaching jobs and took in boarders to survive, she spent endless hours helping with the chores. But that didn't stop her from finishing first in her high school class— and her exams were in Russian!

Since higher education wasn't available to her, she became a governess and tutor. Somehow she managed to save enough money to send her older sister through medical school in Paris. Then she also moved to France to study at the Sorbonne. Two years later she finished first in her class in physics. Another year of study earned her a master's degree in mathematics.

It was then that she turned her attention full time to research, conducting experiments for a French industrial society. But her real passion was searching for the secret to uranium's rays.

While looking for a better laboratory, Marya met the man who would become her husband and research partner, Pierre. You've probably heard of Marya Sklodowska, but it's likely that you learned the name she preferred after she married Pierre Curie in 1895: she called herself Madame Marie Curie.

Madame Curie went on to do groundbreaking work in the field of

radioactivity (a term she coined), and she opened the door to the study of nuclear physics and modern medical radiology. And when Pierre died in an accident in 1906, Marie Curie continued the work and made many additional breakthroughs.

“Life is not easy for any of us,” she once said. “But what of that? We must have perseverance and above all confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something and that this thing must be attained.” Her research brought her great recognition: fifteen gold medals, nineteen degrees, and two Nobel prizes (one in physics and one in chemistry).

Curie’s tenacity was evident not only in her desire to know, but also in her practical application of her research. During World War I, she noted what was happening on the battlefields and recognized that the technology she had discovered could help save lives. She and her daughter Irene (who would later also win a Nobel prize) developed X-radiography and then led a movement to equip ambulances with X-ray equipment. And Curie trained 150 technicians to use it. Curie also helped found the Radium Institute at the University of Paris. Not only did she oversee the building of its laboratories, but she raised funds and materials in Europe and the United States to equip it.

Curie observed, “Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood.” Her intelligence and discernment allowed her to understand and discover many things that have made a positive impact on our world. Unfortunately keen discernment did not extend to her health. Because she was on the cutting edge of research with radioactive materials, she did not protect herself from the effects of radiation. Her work slowly killed her. Rather suddenly, her health declined, and in 1934, she died of leukemia at age sixty-six.

FLESHING IT OUT

Discernment can be described as the ability to find the root of the matter, and it relies on intuition as well as rational thought. Effective leaders need discernment, although even good leaders don’t display it all the time. For

example, read these comments made by leaders, which I like to think of as famous last words:

> "I tell you Wellington is a bad general, the English are bad soldiers; we will settle the matter by lunch time."
>
> *—Napoleon Bonaparte at breakfast with his generals preceding the Battle of Waterloo (1815)*
>
> "I think there is a world market for about five computers."
>
> *—Thomas J. Watson, chairman of IBM (1943)*
>
> "I don't need bodyguards."
>
> *—Jimmy Hoffa, one month before his disappearance (1975)*

Discernment is an indispensable quality for any leader who desires to maximize effectiveness. It helps to do several important things:

1. *Discover the Root Issues*

   Leaders of large organizations must cope with tremendous chaos and complexity every day. They are never able to gather enough information to get a complete picture of just about anything. As a result, they have to rely on discernment. Researcher Henry Mintzberg of McGill University stated, "Organizational effectiveness does not lie in that narrow minded concept called rationality. It lies in the blend of clearheaded logic and powerful intuition." Discernment enables a leader to see a partial picture, fill in the missing pieces intuitively, and find the real heart of a matter.

2. *Enhance Your Problem Solving*

   If you can see the root issue of a problem, you can solve it. The closer a leader is to his area of gifting, the stronger his intuition and ability to see root causes. If you want to tap into your discernment potential, work in your areas of strength.

3. *Evaluate Your Options for Maximum Impact*

   Management consultant Robert Heller has this advice: "Never ignore a gut feeling, but never believe that it's enough." Discernment isn't relying on intuition alone, nor is it relying only on intellect. Discernment enables you

to use both your gut and your head to find the best option for your people and your organization.

4. *Multiply Your Opportunities*

People who lack discernment are seldom in the right place at the right time. Although great leaders often appear to be lucky to some observers, I believe leaders create their own "luck" as the result of discernment, that willingness to use their experience and follow their instincts.

REFLECTING ON IT

Are you a discerning leader? When faced with complex issues, can you readily identify the heart of the matter? Are you able to see root causes of difficult problems without having to get every bit of information? Do you trust your intuition and rely on it as much as you do your intellect and experience? If not, you need to cultivate it. Value nontraditional thinking. Embrace change, ambiguity, and uncertainty. Broaden your horizons experientially. Your intuition will only increase with use.

BRINGING IT HOME

To improve your discernment, do the following:

•*Analyze past successes.* Look at some problems you solved successfully in the past. What was the root issue in each problem? What enabled you to succeed? If you can capture the heart of the matter in a few words, you can probably learn to do it with future issues.

•*Learn how others think.* Which great leaders do you admire? Pick some whose profession or gifting is similar to yours, and read their biographies. By learning how other discerning leaders think, you can become more discerning.

•*Listen to your gut.* Try to recall times when your intuition “spoke” to you and was correct (you may or may not have listened to it at the time). What do those experiences have in common? Look for a pattern that may give you insight into your intuitive ability.

DAILY TAKE-AWAY

For a long time, the Swiss had a lock on watchmaking. They built the best watches money could buy, and by the 1940s, they produced 80 percent of all watches worldwide. In the late 1960s, when an inventor presented an idea for a new type of watch to the leaders of a Swiss watch company, they rejected it. In fact, every Swiss company he approached had the same negative reaction.

Believing his design had merit, the man took it to a company in Japan. The name of the organization was Seiko, the design of the watch was digital, and today, 80 percent of all watches use a digital design. One discernment-driven decision can change the entire course of your destiny.

8 FOCUS : THE SHARPER IT IS, THE SHARPER YOU ARE

If you chase two rabbits, both will escape.

—Unknown

What people say, what people do, and what they say they do are entirely different things.

—Margaret Mead, Anthropologist

A DIFFERENT KIND OF ONE-TRACK MIND

In 1998, the Atlanta Braves and the San Diego Padres played for major-league baseball's National League pennant, and I had the privilege of attending several of the games. Back when I lived in San Diego, I was a die-hard Padres fan, but when I moved to Atlanta in 1997, I changed my allegiance to the Braves. I rooted for them all season long—until they faced San Diego in the play-offs. Why did I change? I could not bring myself to root against Tony Gwynn.

Tony Gwynn is the greatest hitter in the last fifty years—the best since Ted Williams. He has won an incredible eight batting titles. (Only Ty Cobb has won more.) In his career, he has batted a tremendous .339. It's always a joy to watch Gwynn play. He is surely destined for the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

If you saw Tony Gwynn on the street and didn't know who he was, you might not guess he was a professional ballplayer. At five feet eleven inches and 220 pounds, he doesn't look the part of the star athlete the way someone like Mark McGwire does. But make no mistake: Gwynn is a talented athlete, having been drafted out of college for baseball and basketball. And though he has tremendous talent, the real key to his success is focus.

Tony Gwynn loves hitting a baseball, and he *devotes* himself to it. Several times each season, he reads Ted Williams's *The Science of Hitting*, a book he first discovered and read while in college. He watches countless hours of videotape. At home he has a library of hitting tapes, continually fed by his five VCRs that record games via satellite dish. He even reviews tape on the road. When he travels for games, he takes two VCRs so that he can tape and edit every one of his at bats. And when he is not swinging the bat or watching tape, he is talking about hitting constantly—with teammates, at the All-Star Game, with great players such as Ted Williams.

Gwynn just can't get enough. Hitting is his joy. He has been known to arrive at social events with a batting glove sticking out of his pocket, having stopped to hit a few. And even when not practicing, watching tape, or talking to other hitters, he can be found playing Ping-Pong or doing activities to improve his eye-to-hand coordination. Even his decision to remain in San Diego his whole career has improved his game. "One of my strengths is knowing how much I can handle," Gwynn says. "There are few distractions in San Diego. There isn't a lot of media hoopla. That helps me be consistent."

Consistent is right. Gwynn has batted over .300 in every season as a professional except one—his first. Columnist George Will maintains that people who are great at what they do, such as Gwynn, have "cultivated a kind of concentration unknown to most people."

FLESHING IT OUT

What does it take to have the focus required to be a truly effective leader? The keys are priorities and concentration. A leader who knows his priorities but lacks concentration knows what to do but never gets it done. If he has concentration but no priorities, he has excellence without progress. But when he harnesses both, he has the potential to achieve great things.

I frequently meet people in leadership positions who seem to major in minor things. That just doesn't make sense. It would be the equivalent of Tony Gwynn spending all his time studying base stealing. Now, Gwynn *can*

steal bases. He has stolen more than three hundred in his career, but it's not his strength. And dedicating all his time to that instead of hitting would be a waste of his time and talent.

So the important question is, How should you focus your time and energy? Use these guidelines to help you:

Focus 70 Percent on Strengths

Effective leaders who reach their potential spend more time focusing on what they do well than on what they do wrong. Leadership expert Peter Drucker notes, "The great mystery isn't that people do things badly but that they occasionally do a few things well. The only thing that is universal is incompetence. Strength is always specific! Nobody ever commented, for example, that the great violinist Jascha Heifetz probably couldn't play the trumpet very well." To be successful, focus on your strengths and develop them. That's where you should pour your time, energy, and resources.

Focus 25 Percent on New Things

Growth equals change. If you want to get better, you have to keep changing and improving. That means stepping out into new areas. Gwynn modeled that several years ago after he had a conversation with Ted Williams. The old pro suggested that learning to hit inside pitches would make Gwynn a better player. Gwynn, who preferred outside balls, worked on it, and his average went up significantly. If you dedicate time to new things related to areas of strength, then you'll grow as a leader. Don't forget: in leadership, if you're through growing, you're through.

Focus 5 Percent on Areas of Weakness

Nobody can entirely avoid working in areas of weakness. The key is to minimize it as much as possible, and leaders can do it by delegating. For example, I delegate detail work to others. A team of people at The INJOY Group handles all the logistics of my conferences. That way when I'm there, I stick to the things I do best, such as the actual speaking.

REFLECTING ON IT

How would you rate yourself in the area of focus? Have you been majoring in minor things? Have you spent so much time shoring up your weaknesses that you've failed to build up your strengths? Do the people with the least potential monopolize your time? If so, you've probably lost focus.

To get back on track with your focus, do these things:

Work on yourself. You are your greatest asset or detriment.
Work at your priorities. You will have to fight for them.
Work in your strengths. You can reach your potential
Work with your contemporaries. You can't be effective alone.

BRINGING IT HOME

To improve your focus, do the following:

•*Shift to strengths.* Make a list of three or four things you do well in your job. What percentage of your time do you spend doing them? What percentage of your resources is dedicated to these areas of strength? Devise a plan to make changes, allowing you to dedicate 70 percent of your time to your strengths. If you can't, it may be time to reassess your job or career.

•*Staff your weaknesses.* Identify three or four activities necessary for your job that you don't do well. Determine how you can delegate the jobs to others. Will it require hiring staff? Can you partner with a coworker to share responsibilities? Develop a plan.

•*Create an edge*. Now that you've looked at priorities, think about concentration. What would it take for you to go to the next level in your main area of strength? What new tools do you need? Rethink how you do things, and be willing to make sacrifices. Time and money spent to take you to the next level are the best investment you can make.

DAILY TAKE-AWAY

Experienced animal trainers take a stool with them when they step into a cage with a lion. Why a stool? It tames a lion better than anything—except maybe a tranquilizer gun. When the trainer holds the stool with the legs extended toward the lion's face, the animal tries to focus on all four legs at once. And that paralyzes him. Divided focus always works against you.

9 GENEROSITY : YOUR CANDLE LOSES NOTHING WHEN IT LIGHTS ANOTHER

No person was ever honored for what he received. Honor has been the reward for what he gave.

—Calvin Coolidge, American President

Giving is the highest level of living.

—John C. Maxwell

IT STARTS IN THE HEART

When you think of generous people, who comes to mind? Do you picture millionaire philanthropists from the turn of the century such as Andrew Carnegie, J. P. Morgan, and Andrew Mellon? Do you think of contemporary givers such as Joan Kroc or Bill Gates? Those people have given away millions of dollars. But I want to acquaint you with another giver. She is someone you've probably never heard of, yet she typifies the deepest kind of giving, the kind that can come only from the heart.

Her name is Elisabeth Elliot. In the early 1950s, she accompanied a group of missionaries to Ecuador with the hope of reaching the Quichua Indians. Among that group was a young man named Jim, who had been courting her since 1947. While they worked together and gave their lives to serving the Ecuadoran Indians, they finally decided to give themselves to each other and were married.

They had been together about two years and had a ten-month-old daughter named Valerie when Jim and four other missionaries felt compelled to make contact with another small group of Indians living in the area called the Auca. The Indians had a fierce reputation. The earliest record of any contact with them was of their killing a priest in the 1600s. Since then, they had attacked every outsider who came their way. Even the other Ecuadoran Indians avoided them because of their brutality.

As Jim and the others prepared to make contact, Elisabeth knew that the five men would be putting themselves in danger, but she was resolute. The two of them had given their lives to this mission. For several weeks, a missionary pilot flew a small plane over an Aucan village and dropped supplies and other items as gifts. They even included pictures of themselves to prepare the tribes people for their first contact.

A few weeks later, Jim and four others landed on a small stretch of beach on the Curaray River and set up camp. There they made contact with three Aucans—a man and two women—who seemed to be friendly and receptive. And in following days, they met with several others. They told their wives by radio that they seemed to be making significant progress in befriending the tribe.

But then a few days later, the men failed to check in with the base camp at an appointed time. Their wives waited in vain to hear from them. Minutes passed, then hours, and then a day. Elisabeth and the others feared the worst.

A search party went out to look for the men and radioed back bad news. They had spotted the body of a white man floating in the river. The searchers found the men, one by one. With each it was the same: he had been slashed with Aucan spears. All five of the men were dead.

Under those circumstances, many people in Elisabeth Elliot's shoes would have gone home. It's one thing to be willing to give up a comfortable life in the United States to help other people; it's quite another to give up your spouse. But Elliot had a truly generous heart. Despite her terrible loss, she still wanted to help the people of Ecuador. She stayed and served the Quichuans with whom she was living.

What happened after that is even more remarkable. Other missionaries continued trying to make contact with an Aucan village. And after a couple of years, they succeeded. Immediately Elisabeth Elliot rushed to the village. Was it to seek revenge? No, it was to work with the people there and serve them. Elliot lived and worked among the Aucan people for two years, and many of them gladly accepted the message of God's love she carried—including two of the seven men who had killed her husband.

FLESHING IT OUT

Nothing speaks to others more loudly or serves them better than generosity from a leader. True generosity isn't an occasional event. It comes from the heart and permeates every aspect of a leader's life, touching his time, money, talents, and possessions. Effective leaders, the kind that people want to follow, don't gather things just for themselves; they do it in order to give to others. Cultivate the quality of generosity in your life. Here's how:

1. *Be Grateful for Whatever You Have*

   It's hard for a person to be generous when he is not satisfied with what he has. Generosity rises out of contentment, and that doesn't come with acquiring more. Millionaire John D. Rockefeller admitted, "I have made millions, but they have brought me no happiness." If you're not content with little, you won't be content with a lot. And if you're not generous with little, you won't suddenly change if you become wealthy.

2. *Put People First*

   The measure of a leader is not the number of people who serve him, but the number of people he serves. Generosity requires putting others first. If you can do that, giving becomes much easier.

3. *Don't Allow the Desire for Possessions to Control You*

   According to my friend Earle Wilson, people can be divided into three groups: "Haves, havenots, and have not paid for what they have." More and more people are becoming enslaved to the desire to acquire. Author Richard Foster writes, "Owning things is an obsession in our culture. If we own it, we feel we can control it; and if we can control it, we feel it will give us more pleasure. The idea is an illusion." If you want to be in charge of your heart, don't allow possessions to take charge of you.

4. *Regard Money as a Resource*

   Someone once said that when it comes to money, you can't win. If you focus on making it, you're materialistic. If you try to but don't make any,

you're a loser. If you make a lot and keep it, you're a miser. If you make it and spend it, you're a spendthrift. If you don't care about making any, you're unambitious. If you make a lot and still have it when you die, you're a fool—for trying to take it with you.

The only way to really win with money is to hold it loosely—and be generous with it to accomplish things of value. As E. Stanley Jones said, "Money is a wonderful servant but a terrible master. If it gets on top and you get under it, you will become its slave."

5. Develop the Habit of Giving

In 1889, millionaire industrialist Andrew Carnegie wrote an essay called "Gospel of Wealth." In it he said that the life of a wealthy person should have two periods: a time of acquiring wealth and one of redistributing it. The only way to maintain an attitude of generosity is to make it your habit to give—your time, attention, money, and resources. Richard Foster advises, "Just the very act of letting go of money, or some other treasure, does something within us. It destroys the demon greed." If you're enslaved by greed, you cannot lead.

REFLECTING ON IT

Are you a generous leader? Do you continually look for ways to add value to others? Are you giving money to something greater than yourself? And to whom are you giving your time? Are you pouring your life into others? Are you helping those who cannot help you or give anything in return? Writer John Bunyan affirmed, "You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you." If you aren't giving in the small areas of your life, you're probably not as generous a leader as you could be.

BRINGING IT HOME

To improve your generosity, do the following:

•*Give something away.* Find out what kind of hold your possessions have on you. Take something you truly value, think of someone you care about who could benefit from it, and give it to him. If you can do it anonymously, even better.

•*Put your money to work.* If you know someone with the vision to do something really great—something that will positively impact the lives of others—provide resources for him to accomplish it. Put your money to work for something that will outlive you.

•*Find someone to mentor.* Once you reach a certain level in your leadership, the most valuable thing you have to give is yourself. Find someone to pour your life into. Then give him time and resources to become a better leader.

DAILY TAKE-AWAY

When popular French author Dominique Lapierre first traveled to India to do research for a new book, he went in style—in a Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow he had just purchased with a book advance. While he was there, he got what he needed for his book *The City of Joy* . But he also received something else: a passion to help the poor and miserable people he discovered there. That discovery has changed his life forever. Now he divides his time between writing, fund-raising, and donating time and money to help the people. His attitude can be summed up by the words of Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, which are printed on the back of Lapierre's business card: "All that is not given is lost." What are you currently losing by holding on to it?

Demo version limitation

11 LISTENING : TO CONNECT WITH THEIR HEARTS, USE YOUR EARS

The ear of the leader must ring with the voices of the people.

—Woodrow Wilson, American President

A good leader encourages followers to tell him what he needs to know, not what he wants to hear.

—John C. Maxwell

AS MUCH AS SHE TALKS, SHE LISTENS MORE

Who would you include in a list of the most influential people in the United States? Certainly the president would make that list. So would Alan Greenspan. Michael Jordan might make it—his is the most recognized face on the planet. You could argue for Bill Gates to be on it. Stop for a moment and think about the people you would include. Now I want you to add a name that you might not have considered: Oprah Winfrey.

In 1985, Winfrey was practically unknown. She appeared in Steven Spielberg's *The Color Purple,* and she was the host of a local morning talk show, which she had been doing in Chicago for a year. What success she had achieved could be attributed to her ability to talk. "Communicating with people is how I always developed any kind of value about myself," explains Winfrey. And she received praise for it early in life. "I remember being two years old and speaking in church and hearing people say, 'That child sure can talk. That is one talking child.'"

But Winfrey also did more than her share of listening. In fact, the ability to listen has been a chief characteristic of her life. She is an inveterate learner, and her listening ability got its start as she absorbed the wisdom of writers. She devoured fiction and biographies, learning about how other people feel and think— and in the process she also learned about herself.

That bent toward listening has served her well in every aspect of her career. Its application is obvious for her television show. She is constantly observing and listening to find issues to address on the air. And when she brings celebrities, authors, or experts on her show, she genuinely listens to what they have to say. Music star Madonna said about her, “She has been in the public eye for so long, yet she has this amazing rapport with people. I don’t know how she does it.” She does it through listening.

Oprah Winfrey’s ability to listen has been rewarded with remarkable success and incredible influence. She is the highest paid entertainer in the world and is worth nearly half a billion dollars. Each week, thirty-three million people in the United States alone watch her show.

Despite her show’s success, she recently gave thought to discontinuing it. But instead she decided to revamp it. How did she decide what changes to make? She asked her staff.

“It doesn’t have to be work,” she told them. “Making changes in this show is like making changes in our lives. It can be fun to do. So let’s stretch. What can we do to make it more fun?”

She had a lot of doubts about one of the ideas her people came up with. But she also had enough wisdom to listen to it— and give it a try. The idea was for a book club. As you probably know, its success has been phenomenal. Hundreds of thousands of people are learning and growing by reading, some for the first time. And Winfrey is delighted. Her goal in life is to add value to people. And she succeeds because she listens.

FLESHING IT OUT

In *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership,* I point out that leaders touch a heart before they ask for a hand. That’s the Law of Connection. But before a leader can touch a person’s heart, he has to know what’s in it. He learns that by listening.

An unwillingness to listen is too common among poor leaders. Peter Drucker, the father of American management, believes that 60 percent of all management problems are the result of faulty communications. I would say

that the overwhelming majority of communication problems come from poor listening.

A lot of voices are clamoring out there for your attention. As you think about how to spend your listening time, keep in mind that you have two purposes for listening: to connect with people and to learn. For that reason, you should keep your ear open to these people:

1. *Your Followers*

Good leaders, the kind that people want to follow, do more than conduct business when they interact with followers. They take the time to get a feel for who each one is as a person. Philip Stanhope, the earl of Chesterfield, believed, “many a man would rather you heard his story than granted his request.” If you’re in the habit of listening only to the facts and not the person who expresses them, change your focus—and really listen.

2. *Your Customers*

A Cherokee saying states, “Listen to the whispers and you won’t have to hear the screams.” I am amazed by the leaders who are so caught up in their own ideas that they never hear their customers’ concerns, complaints, and suggestions. In his book *Business @ the Speed of Thought,* Microsoft CEO Bill Gates said, “Unhappy customers are always a concern. They’re also your greatest opportunity.” Good leaders always make it a priority to keep in contact with the people they’re serving.

3. *Your Competitors*

Sam Markewich announced, “If you don’t agree with me, it means you haven’t been listening.” Though he was no doubt making a joke, the sad truth is that when a leader sees another organization as competition, he focuses his attention on building his own case or championing his cause and forgets to learn from what the other group is doing.

Larry King says, “I remind myself every morning: nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I’m going to learn, I must do it by listening.” As a leader, you don’t want to base your actions on what the other guy is doing, but you should still listen and learn what you can to improve

yourself.

4. Your Mentors

No leader is so advanced or experienced that he can afford to be without a mentor. I've learned so much from leaders who have more experience than I have, people such as Melvin Maxwell (my father), Elmer Towns, Jack Hayford, Fred Smith, and J. Oswald Sanders. If you don't already have a mentor, go out and find one. If you can't get someone to help you in person, begin the process by reading books. That's where I got started. The main thing is to get the process under way.

REFLECTING ON IT

Are you a good listener? I know when I started in leadership, I wasn't. I was too busy doing my own thing and trying to make things happen. But once I slowed down and paid greater attention to what was going on around me, I found that my activity had sharper focus and accomplished more.

When was the last time you really paid close attention to people and what they have to say? Do more than just grab onto facts. Start listening not only for words, but also for feelings, meanings, and undercurrents.

BRINGING IT HOME

To improve your listening, do the following:

•*Change your schedule.* Do you spend time listening to your followers, customers, competitors, and mentors? If you don't have all four groups on your calendar regularly, you're probably not giving them enough attention. Pencil in time for each of them on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.

•*Meet people on their turf.* A key to being a good listener is to find common ground with people. The next time you meet with an employee or a

customer, discipline yourself to ask four or five questions about him as a person. Get to know who he is, and seek common ground to build your connection with him.

•*Listen between the lines.* As you interact with people, you certainly want to pay attention to the factual content of the conversation. But don't ignore the emotional content. Sometimes you can learn more about what's really going on by reading between the lines. Spend time in the coming days and weeks listening with your heart.

DAILY TAKE-AWAY

President Theodore Roosevelt was a man of action, but he was also a good listener, and he appreciated that quality in other people. Once at a gala ball, he grew tired of meeting people who returned his remarks with stiff, mindless pleasantries. So he began to greet people with a smile, saying, "I murdered my grandmother this morning." Most people, so nervous about meeting him, didn't even hear what he said. But one diplomat did. Upon hearing the president's remark, he leaned over and whispered to him, "I'm sure she had it coming to her!" The only way to find out what you're missing is to start listening.

12 PASSION : TAKE THIS LIFE AND LOVE IT

When a leader reaches out in passion, he is usually met with an answering passion.

—John C. Maxwell

Anyone can dabble, but once you've made that commitment, your blood has that particular thing in it, and it's very hard for people to stop you.

—Bill Cosby, Comedian

PIZZA SAUCE IS IN HIS BLOOD

In *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership,* I tell the story of Papa John's Pizza and how the company, founded in 1984 by John Schnatter, grew from 1 to 46 stores in its first seven years and then from 46 to 1,600 in the seven years after that. The phenomenal success the company experienced in the second half was due to the Law of Explosive Growth, which says, "To add growth, lead followers—to multiply, lead leaders." But what was the key to Papa John's success in the first half?

The answer is passion. John Schnatter not only eats Papa John's Pizza; he breathes, sleeps, and lives it. It is always his predominating thought. Lehman Brothers analyst Michael Speiser said of him in *Success* magazine, "Pizza is Schnatter's life, and he takes it very seriously."

Schnatter's philosophy is simple and straightforward. "Concentrate on what you do well," he advises, "and do it better than anybody else." What he does well is lead the fastest-growing business of its kind in the world. And he enjoys it so much that he is always in the thick of things.

Recently he went to visit a franchise owned by his wife, Annette, in downtown Louisville and found that the store was unexpectedly swamped with orders. What did he do? He jumped in and helped make pizzas for an hour and a half. It's something he loves doing. He visits stores four or five times a week—often unannounced—just to make sure everything is on

track.

"Talking about my dreams for a pizza business at age twenty two, people thought I was crazy," Schnatter has said. "Vendors, bankers and even some friends just laughed when I told them I'd be opening five or six stores a month." Now he regularly opens an amazing *thirty* stores a month—a new store every day of the year.

And he wants to increase that. A franchise opened in Mexico, and Schnatter has plans to expand into Venezuela, Puerto Rico, and other foreign markets. He doesn't intend to stop until he leads the largest seller of pizza in the world. He just might do it because he loves it and gives it everything he's got.

FLESHING IT OUT

Experts spend a lot of time trying to figure out what makes people successful. They often look at people's credentials, intelligence, education, and other factors. But more than anything else, passion makes the difference. David Sarnoff of RCA maintains that "nobody can be successful unless he loves his work."

If you look at the lives of effective leaders, you will find that they often don't fit into a stereotypical mold. For example, more than 50 percent of all CEOs of Fortune 500 companies had C or C– averages in college. Nearly 75 percent of all U.S. presidents were in the bottom half of their school classes. And more than 50 percent of all millionaire entrepreneurs never finished college. What makes it possible for people who might seem ordinary to achieve great things? The answer is passion. Nothing can take the place of passion in a leader's life.

Take a look at four truths about passion and what it can do for you as a leader:

1. *Passion Is the First Step to Achievement*

Your desire determines your destiny. Think of great leaders, and you will be

struck by their passion: Gandhi for human rights, Winston Churchill for freedom, Martin Luther King Jr. for equality, Bill Gates for technology.

Anyone who lives beyond an ordinary life has great desire. It's true in any field: weak desire brings weak results, just as a small fire creates little heat. The stronger your fire, the greater the desire—and the greater the potential.

2. Passion Increases Your Willpower

It is said that a dispassionate young man approached the Greek philosopher Socrates and casually stated, "O great Socrates, I come to you for knowledge."

The philosopher took the young man down to the sea, waded in with him, and then dunked him under the water for thirty seconds. When he let the young man up for air, Socrates asked him to repeat what he wanted.

"Knowledge, O great one," he sputtered. Socrates put him under the water again, only that time a little longer. After repeated dunkings and responses, the philosopher asked, "What do you want?" The young man finally gasped, "Air. I want air!"

"Good," answered Socrates. "Now, when you want knowledge as much as you wanted air, you shall have it."

There is no substitute for passion. It is fuel for the will. If you want anything badly enough, you can find the willpower to achieve it. The only way to have that kind of desire is to develop passion.

3. Passion Changes You

If you follow your passion—instead of others' perceptions—you can't help becoming a more dedicated, productive person. And that increases your ability to impact others. In the end, your passion will have more influence than your personality.

4. Passion Makes the Impossible Possible

Human beings are so made that whenever anything fires the soul, impossibilities vanish. A fire in the heart lifts everything in your life. That's

why passionate leaders are so effective. A leader with great passion and few skills always outperforms a leader with great skills and no passion.

REFLECTING ON IT

Despite the power of passion, many people in our culture seem to believe that passion is something to be suspicious about. Sociologist Tony Campolo has observed, “We are caught up at a particular stage in our national ethos in which we’re not only materialistic but worse than that; we’re becoming emotionally dead as people. We don’t sing, we don’t dance, we don’t even commit sin with much enthusiasm.”

Is passion a characteristic of your life? Do you wake up feeling enthusiastic about your day? Is the first day of the week your favorite, or do you live from weekend to weekend, sleepwalking through your everyday routine? How long has it been since you couldn’t sleep because you were too *excited* by an idea?

If passion is not a quality in your life, you’re in trouble as a leader. The truth is that you can never lead something you don’t care passionately about. You can’t start a fire in your organization unless one is first burning in you.

BRINGING IT HOME

To increase your passion, do the following:

•*Take your temperature.* How passionate are you about your life and work? Does it show? Get an honest assessment by querying several coworkers and your spouse about your level of desire. You won’t become passionate until you believe passion can be the difference maker in your life.

•*Return to your first love.* Many people allow life and its circumstances to get them off track. Think back to when you were just starting out in your

career—or even farther back to when you were a child. What really turned your crank? What could you spend hours and hours doing? Try to recapture your old enthusiasm. Then evaluate your life and career in light of those old loves.

•*Associate with people of passion.* It sounds hokey, but birds of a feather really do flock together. If you've lost your fire, get around some firelighters. Passion is contagious. Schedule some time with people who can infect you with it.

DAILY TAKE-AWAY

General Billy Mitchell, a career army officer, was assigned to an aviation section in 1916. That's where he learned to fly, and it became the passion of his life. Though aircraft played a minor role in World War I, he could see the military potential of air power. After the war, he began a campaign to convince the military to create an air force. He provided demonstration after demonstration of what airplanes could do, but he met strong resistance. Frustrated, he forced the army to court-martial him in 1925. A year later he resigned. Only after World War II was Mitchell exonerated—and posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. He was willing to pay any price to do what he knew was right. How about you?

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14 PROBLEM SOLVING : YOU CAN'T LET YOUR PROBLEMS BE A PROBLEM

You can measure a leader by the problems he tackles. He always looks for ones his own size.

—John C. Maxwell

The measure of success is not whether you have a tough problem to deal with, but whether it is the same problem you had last year.

—John Foster Dulles, Former Secretary of State

THE SMALL-TOWN MERCHANT WHO COULD

The founder of Wal-Mart, Sam Walton, has been called many things, including enemy of small-town America and destroyer of Main Street merchants. "Quite a few smaller stores have gone out of business during the time of Wal-Mart's growth," conceded Walton. "Some people have tried to turn it into this big controversy, sort of a 'Save the Small Town Merchants' deal, like they were whales or whooping cranes or something." The truth is that Walton *was* a small-town, Main Street merchant of the type he is criticized for displacing. The only difference is that he was an excellent leader who was able to solve problems and change rather than go out of business.

Sam Walton was born in Kingfisher, Oklahoma, and grew up in Columbia, Missouri. He demonstrated leadership in high school when he was elected student-body president, led his football team to an undefeated season and state championship as its quarterback, and then performed the same feat with the basketball team as its five-foot-nine-inch floor leader.

After graduating from college and working for a few years, Walton served in the army during World War II. When he got out, he selected a career in retail, the field he loved, and along with his wife picked the small town of Bentonville, Arkansas, in which to live. That's where they opened a

Walton's Five and Dime Variety Store.

The business did well, partly because of Walton's hustle, but also because he had shown foresight in making his store self-service, a new concept at the time. He worked hard and continued to expand. By 1960, he had fifteen stores. But that was also about the time when competitor Herb Gibson brought discount stores into northwest Arkansas. They competed directly with Walton's variety stores.

"We really had only two choices," said Walton, "stay in the variety store business and be hit hard by the discounting wave, or open a discount store. So I started running all over the country, studying the concept . . . We opened Wal-Mart Number 1 on July 2, 1962, in Rogers, Arkansas, right down the road from Bentonville."

Walton soon added additional stores. His Wal-Mart chain was small compared to some of the others begun around the same time—Kmart, Target, and Woolco—but it was going strong. And that led to the next problem. Walton realized that he needed to improve the stores' planning and distribution. He and his people solved the problem by creating central distribution centers. That, along with computerization, allowed them to order in bulk, keep track of each store's needs, and distribute to them quickly and efficiently. And when the outlay for new equipment and buildings for the new distribution centers created a heavy debt load, it was merely another problem to be solved. Walton did it by taking the company public in 1970.

When he died in 1992, the company operated more than 1,700 stores in forty-two states and Mexico. Sam Walton, the small-town variety store owner, had become America's number one retailer. And since his death, the company has continued strongly, its leadership still solving problems as they arise and keeping Wal-Mart and the other retail chain, Sam's Club, moving forward.

FLESHING IT OUT

Effective leaders, like Sam Walton, always rise to a challenge. That's one of

the things that separates winners from whiners. While other retailers complained about the competition, Walton rose above it by solving his problems with creativity and tenacity.

No matter what field a leader is in, he will face problems. They are inevitable for three reasons. First, we live in a world of growing complexity and diversity. Second, we interact with people. And third, we cannot control all the situations we face.

Leaders with good problem-solving ability demonstrate five qualities:

1. *They Anticipate Problems*

Since problems are inevitable, good leaders anticipate them. Anyone who expects the road to be easy will continually find himself in trouble. I heard a story about David Livingstone, the missionary to Africa, that illustrates the kind of attitude leaders need. A mission organization wanted to send helpers to Dr. Livingstone, so its leader wrote, “Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to send other men to join you.”

Livingstone replied, “If you have men who will come *only* if they know there is a good road, I don’t want them. I want men who will come even if there is no road at all.” If you keep your attitude positive but plan for the worst, you’ll find yourself in a good position to solve problems that come your way.

2. *They Accept the Truth*

People respond to problems in these ways: they refuse to accept them; they accept them and then put up with them; or they accept them and try to make things better. Leaders must always do the latter.

Broadcaster Paul Harvey said, “In times like these it is good to remember that there have always been times like these.” No leader can simultaneously have his head in the sand and navigate his people through troubled waters. Effective leaders face up to the reality of a situation.

3. *They See the Big Picture*

Leaders must continually see the big picture. They cannot afford to be overwhelmed by emotion. Nor can they allow themselves to get so bogged down in the details that they lose sight of what's important. Author Alfred Armand Montapert wrote, "The majority see the obstacles; the few see the objectives; history records the successes of the latter, while oblivion is the reward of the former."

4. *They Handle One Thing at a Time*

   Richard Sloma has this advice: "Never try to solve all the problems at once —make them line up for you one-by-one." The leaders who get into trouble most often are the ones who are overwhelmed by the sheer size or volume of their troubles and then dabble at problem solving. If you're faced with lots of problems, make sure you really solve the one you're working on before moving on to the next one.

5. *They Don't Give Up a Major Goal When They're Down*

   Effective leaders understand the peak-to-peak principle. They make major decisions when they are experiencing a positive swing in their leadership, not during the dark times. As NFL fullback Bob Christian says, "I never decide whether it's time to retire during training camp." He knows not to give up when he is in the valley.

REFLECTING ON IT

Author George Matthew Adams stated, "What you think means more than anything else in your life. More than what you earn, more than where you live, more than your social position, and more than what anyone else may think about you." Every problem introduces you to yourself. It shows you how you think and what you're made of.

When you come face-to-face with a problem, how do you react? Do you ignore it and hope it will go away? Do you feel powerless to solve it? Have you had such bad experiences trying to solve problems in the past that you've just given up? Or do you tackle them willingly? The ability to solve

problems effectively comes from experience facing and overcoming obstacles. Each time you solve another problem, you get a little better at the process. But if you never try, fail, and try again, you'll never be good at it.

BRINGING IT HOME

To improve your problem solving, do the following:

•*Look for trouble.* If you've been avoiding problems, go out looking for them. You'll only get better if you gain experience dealing with them. Find situations that need fixing, come up with several viable solutions, and then take them to a leader with good problem-solving experience. You'll learn from his decisions how he thinks when handling difficulties.

•*Develop a method.* Some people have a hard time solving problems because they don't know how to tackle them. Try using the TEACH process:

T IME—spend time to discover the real issue.

E XPOSURE—find out what others have done.

A SSISTANCE—have your team study all angles.

C REATIVITY —brainstorm multiple solutions.

H IT IT —implement the best solution.

•*Surround yourself with problem solvers.* If you aren't a good problem solver, bring others onto your team who are. They will immediately complement your weaknesses, and you will also learn from them.

DAILY TAKE-AWAY

Boxer Gene Tunney won the world heavyweight championship by beating Jack Dempsey. Most people don't know that when Tunney started his

boxing career, he was a power puncher. But before turning pro, he broke both hands. His doctor and manager told him he would never be a world champion as a result. But that didn’t deter him.

“If I can’t become a champion as a puncher,” he said, “I’ll make it as a boxer.” He learned and he became one of the most skillful boxers ever to become champion. Never allow others to put obstacles in the pathway to your dreams.

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18 SELF-DISCIPLINE :THE FIRST PERSON YOU LEAD IS YOU

The first and best victory is to conquer self.

—Plato, Philosopher

A man without decision of character can never be said to belong to himself . . .He belongs to whatever can make captive of him.

—John Foster, Author

KING OF THE HILL

It's a tough road to the top. Not many people ever reach the place where they are considered one of the best at their work. And even fewer are believed to be *the* best—ever. Yet that's what Jerry Rice has achieved. He is called the best person ever to play wide receiver in football. And he has got the records to prove it.

People who know him well say he is a natural. Physically his God-given gifts are incredible. He has everything a coach would want in a receiver. Hall of Fame football coach Bill Walsh said, "I don't think there's been a guy equal to him physically." Yet that alone has not made him great. The real key to his success has been his self-discipline. He works and prepares — day in and day out—unlike anyone else in professional football.

The story of Rice's ability to push himself can be told in his experiences conquering hills. The first came in high school. At the end of each practice, B. L. Moor High School Coach Charles Davis used to have his players sprint twenty times up and down a forty-yard hill. On a particularly hot and muggy Mississippi day, Rice was ready to give up after eleven trips. As he sneaked toward the locker room, he realized what he was doing. "Don't quit," he told himself. "Because once you get into that mode of quitting, then you feel like it's okay." He went back and finished his sprints, and he

has never been a quitter since.

As a professional player, he has become famous for his ability to sprint up another hill. This one is a rugged 2.5-mile park trail in San Carlos, California, that Rice makes a regular part of his workout schedule. Other top players try to keep up with him on it, but they fall behind, astounded by his stamina. But that's only a part of Rice's regular routine. Even in the off-season, while other players are fishing or lying around enjoying downtime, Rice is working, his normal exercise routine lasting from 7:00 A.M. to noon. Someone once joked, "He is so well-conditioned that he makes Jamie Lee Curtis look like James Earl Jones."

"What a lot of guys don't understand about Jerry is that with him, football's a twelve-month thing," says NFL corner-back Kevin Smith. "He's a natural, but he still works. That's what separates the good from the great."

Rice recently climbed another hill in his career: he made a comeback from a devastating injury. Prior to that, he had never missed a game in nineteen seasons of football, a testament to his disciplined work ethic and absolute tenacity. When he blew out his knee on August 31, 1997, people thought he was finished for the season. After all, only one player had ever had a similar injury and come back in the same season—Rod Woodson. He had rehabilitated his knee in four and a half months. Rice did it in three and a half—through sheer grit, determination, and incredible self-discipline. People had never seen anything like it before, and they might not again. And Rice continues to build his records and his reputation while helping his team win.

FLESHING IT OUT

Jerry Rice is a perfect example of the power of self-discipline. No one achieves and sustains success without it. And no matter how gifted a leader is, his gifts will never reach their maximum potential without the application of self-discipline. It positions a leader to go to the highest level and is a key to leadership that lasts.

If you want to become a leader for whom self-discipline is an asset,

follow these action points:

1. Develop and Follow Your Priorities

Anyone who does what he must only when he is in the mood or when it's convenient isn't going to be successful. Nor will people respect and follow him. Someone once said, "To do important tasks, two things are necessary: a plan and not quite enough time." As a leader, you already have too little time. Now all you need is a plan. If you can determine what's really a priority and release yourself from everything else, it's a lot easier to follow through on what's important. And that's the essence of self-discipline.

2. Make a Disciplined Lifestyle Your Goal

Learning about any highly disciplined person, such as Jerry Rice, should make you realize that to be successful, self-discipline can't be a one-time event. It has to become a lifestyle.

One of the best ways to do that is to develop systems and routines, especially in areas crucial to your long-term growth and success. For example, because I continually write and speak, I read and file material for future use every day. And since my heart attack in December 1998, I exercise every morning. It's not something I'll do just for a season. I'll do it every day for the rest of my life.

3. Challenge Your Excuses

To develop a lifestyle of discipline, one of your first tasks must be to challenge and eliminate any tendency to make excuses. As French classical writer François La Rochefoucauld said, "Almost all our faults are more pardonable than the methods we think up to hide them." If you have several reasons why you can't be self-disciplined, realize that they are really just a bunch of excuses— all of which need to be challenged if you want to go to the next level as a leader.

4. Remove Rewards Until the Job Is Done

Author Mike Delaney wisely remarked, "Any business or industry that pays equal rewards to its goof-offs and its eager-beavers sooner or later will find

itself with more goof-offs than eager-beavers." If you lack self-discipline, you may be in the habit of having dessert before eating your vegetables.

A story illustrates the power of withholding rewards. An older couple had been at a campground for a couple of days when a family arrived at the site next to them. As soon as their sport-utility vehicle came to a stop, the couple and their three kids piled out. One child hurriedly unloaded ice chests, backpacks, and other items while the other two quickly put up tents. The site was ready in fifteen minutes.

The older couple was amazed. "You folks sure do work great together," the elderly gentleman told the dad admiringly.

"You just need a system," replied the dad. "Nobody goes to the bathroom until camp's set up."

5. Stay Focused on Results

Anytime you concentrate on the difficulty of the work instead of its results or rewards, you're likely to become discouraged. Dwell on it too long, and you'll develop self-pity instead of self-discipline. The next time you're facing a must-do task and you're thinking of doing what's convenient instead of paying the price, change your focus. Count the benefits of doing what's right, and then dive in.

REFLECTING ON IT

Author H. Jackson Brown Jr. quipped, "Talent without discipline is like an octopus on roller skates. There's plenty of movement, but you never know if it's going to be forward, backwards, or sideways." If you know you have talent, and you've seen a lot of motion—but little concrete results—you may lack self-discipline.

Look at last week's schedule. How much of your time did you devote to regular, disciplined activities? Did you do anything to grow and improve yourself professionally? Did you engage in activities promoting good health? Did you dedicate part of your income to savings or investments? If

you've been putting off those things, telling yourself that you'll do them later, you may need to work on your self-discipline.

BRINGING IT HOME

To improve your self-discipline, do the following:

•*Sort out your priorities.* Think about which two or three areas of life are most important to you. Write them down, along with the disciplines that you must develop to keep growing and improving in those areas. Develop a plan to make the disciplines a daily or weekly part of your life.

•*List the reasons.* Take the time to write out the benefits of practicing the disciplines you've just listed. Then post the benefits someplace where you will see them daily. On the days when you don't want to follow through, reread your list.

•*Get rid of excuses.* Write down every reason why you might not be able to follow through with your disciplines. Read through them. You need to dismiss them as the excuses they are. Even if a reason seems legitimate, find a solution to overcome it. Don't leave yourself any reasons to quit. Remember, only in the moment of discipline do you have the power to achieve your dreams.

DAILY TAKE-AWAY

A nursery in Canada displays this sign on its wall: "The best time to plant a tree is twenty-five years ago . . . The second best time is today." Plant the tree of self-discipline in your life today.

19 SERVANTHOOD : TO GET AHEAD, PUT OTHERS FIRST

The true leader serves. Serves people. Serves their best interests, and in so doing will not always be popular, may not always impress. But because true leaders are motivated by loving concern rather than a desire for personal glory, they are willing to pay the price.

—Eugene B. Habecker, Author

You've got to love your people more than your position.

—John C. Maxwell

ON SHAKY GROUND

Not long ago Americans became acquainted with U.S. Army General H. Norman Schwarzkopf. He displayed highly successful leadership abilities in commanding the allied troops in the Persian Gulf War, just as he had done throughout his career, beginning in his days at West Point.

In *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership,* I wrote how in Vietnam he turned around a battalion that was in shambles. The First Battalion of the Sixth Infantry—known as the "worst of the sixth"—went from laughingstock to effective fighting force and were selected to perform a more difficult mission. That turned out to be an assignment to what Schwarzkopf described as "a horrible, malignant place" called the Batangan Peninsula. The area had been fought over for thirty years, was covered with mines and booby traps, and was the site of numerous weekly casualties from those devices.

Schwarzkopf made the best of a bad situation. He introduced procedures to greatly reduce casualties, and whenever a soldier *was* injured by a mine, he flew out to check on the man, had him evacuated using his chopper, and talked to the other men to boost their morale.

On May 28, 1970, a man was injured by a mine, and Schwarzkopf flew

to the man's location. While the helicopter was evacuating the injured soldier, another soldier stepped on a mine, severely injuring his leg. The man thrashed around on the ground, screaming and wailing. That's when everyone realized the first mine hadn't been a lone booby trap. They were all standing in the middle of a minefield.

Schwarzkopf believed the injured man could survive and even keep his leg—but only if he stopped flailing around. There was only one thing he could do. He had to go after the man and immobilize him. Schwarzkopf wrote,

> I started through the minefield, one slow step at a time, staring at the ground, looking for telltale bumps or little prongs sticking up from the dirt. My knees were shaking so hard that each time I took a step, I had to grab my leg and steady it with both hands before I could take another . . It seemed like a thousand years before I reached the kid.

The 240-pound Schwarzkopf, who had been a wrestler at West Point, then pinned the wounded man and calmed him down. It saved his life. And with the help of an engineer team, Schwarzkopf got him and the others out of the minefield.

The quality that Schwarzkopf displayed that day could be described as heroism, courage, or even foolhardiness. But I think the word that best describes it is *servanthood*. On that day in May, the only way he could be effective as a leader was to serve the soldier who was in trouble.

FLESHING IT OUT

When you think of servanthood, do you envision it as an activity performed by relatively low-skilled people at the bottom of the positional totem pole? If you do, you have a wrong impression. Servanthood is not about position or skill. It's about attitude. You have undoubtedly met people in service positions who have poor attitudes toward servanthood: the rude worker at the government agency, the waiter who can't be bothered with taking your order, the store clerk who talks on the phone with a friend instead of helping you.

Just as you can sense when a worker doesn't want to help people, you

can just as easily detect whether a leader has a servant's heart. And the truth is that the best leaders desire to serve others, not themselves.

What does it mean to embody the quality of servanthood? A true servant leader:

1. Puts Others Ahead of His Own Agenda

The first mark of servanthood is the ability to put others ahead of yourself and your personal desires. It is more than being willing to put your agenda on hold. It means intentionally being aware of your people's needs, available to help them, and able to accept their desires as important.

2. Possesses the Confidence to Serve

The real heart of servanthood is security. Show me someone who thinks he is too important to serve, and I'll show you someone who is basically insecure. How we treat others is really a reflection of how we think about ourselves. Philosopher-poet Eric Hoffer captured that thought:

> The remarkable thing is that we really love our neighbor as ourselves; we do unto others as we do unto ourselves. We hate others when we hate ourselves. We are tolerant toward others when we tolerate ourselves. We forgive others when we forgive ourselves. It is not love of self but hatred of self which is at the root of the troubles that afflict our world.

The Law of Empowerment says that only secure leaders give power to others. It's also true that only secure leaders exhibit servanthood.

3. Initiates Service to Others

Just about anyone will serve if compelled to do so. And some will serve in a crisis. But you can really see the heart of someone who initiates service to others. Great leaders see the need, seize the opportunity, and serve without expecting anything in return.

4. Is Not Position-Conscious

Servant leaders don't focus on rank or position. When Colonel Norman Schwarzkopf stepped into that minefield, rank was the last thing on his mind. He was one person trying to help another. If anything, being the

leader gave him a greater sense of obligation to serve.

5. Serves Out of Love

Servanthood is not motivated by manipulation or self-promotion. It is fueled by love. In the end, the extent of your influence depends on the depth of your concern for others. That's why it's so important for leaders to be willing to serve.

REFLECTING ON IT

Where is your heart when it comes to serving others? Do you desire to become a leader for the perks and benefits? Or are you motivated by a desire to help others?

If you really want to become the kind of leader that people want to follow, you will have to settle the issue of servanthood. If your attitude is to be served rather than to serve, you may be headed for trouble. If this is an issue in your life, then heed this advice:

Stop lording over people, and *start* listening to them.

Stop role-playing for advancement, and *start* risking for others' benefit.

Stop seeking your own way, and *start* serving others.

It is true that those who would be great must be like the least and the servant of all.

BRINGING IT HOME

To improve your servanthood, do the following:

•*Perform small acts.* When was the last time you performed small acts of kindness for others? Start with those closest to you: your spouse, children, parents. Find ways today to do small things that show others you care.

•*Learn to walk slowly through the crowd.* One of the greatest lessons I learned as a young leader came from my father. I call it walking slowly through the crowd. The next time you attend a function with a number of clients, colleagues, or employees, make it your goal to connect with others by circulating among them and talking to people. Focus on each person you meet. Learn his name if you don't know it already. Make your agenda getting to know each person's needs, wants, and desires. Then later when you go home, make a note to yourself to do something beneficial for half a dozen of those people.

•*Move into action.* If an attitude of servanthood is conspicuously absent from your life, the best way to change it is to start serving. Begin serving with your body, and your heart will eventually catch up. Sign up to serve others for six months at your church, a community agency, or a volunteer organization. If your attitude still isn't good at the end of your term, do it again. Keep at it until your heart changes.

DAILY TAKE-AWAY

Albert Schweitzer wisely stated, "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: The ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve." If you want to lead on the highest level, be willing to serve on the lowest.

Demo version limitation

21 VISION : YOU CAN SEIZE ONLY WHAT YOU CAN SEE

A great leader’s courage to fulfill his vision comes from passion, not position.

—John C. Maxwell

The future belongs to those who see possibilities before they become obvious.

—John Sculley
Former CEO of Pepsi and Apple Computer

NO CHIPPED PAINT. . ALL THE HORSES JUMP

One of the great dreamers of the twentieth century was Walt Disney. Any person who could create the first sound cartoon, first all-color cartoon, and first animated feature-length motion picture is definitely someone with vision. But Disney’s greatest masterpieces of vision were Disneyland and Walt Disney World. And the spark for that vision came from an unexpected place.

Back when Walt’s two daughters were young, he used to take them to an amusement park in the Los Angeles area on Saturday mornings. His girls loved it, and he did too. An amusement park is a kid’s paradise, with wonderful atmosphere: the smell of popcorn and cotton candy, the gaudy colors of signs advertising rides, and the sound of kids screaming as the roller coaster plummets over a hill.

Walt was especially captivated by the carousel. As he approached it, he saw a blur of bright images racing around to the tune of energetic calliope music. But when he got closer and the carousel stopped, he could see that his eye had been fooled. He observed shabby horses with cracked and chipped paint. And he noticed that only the horses on the outside row moved up and down. The others stood lifeless, bolted to the floor.

The cartoonist’s disappointment inspired him with a grand vision. In his

mind's eye he could see an amusement park where the illusion didn't evaporate, where children and adults could enjoy a carnival atmosphere without the seedy side that accompanies some circuses or traveling carnivals. His dream became Disneyland. As Larry Taylor stated in *Be an Orange*, Walt's vision could be summarized as, "No chipped paint. All the horses jump."

FLESHING IT OUT

Vision is everything for a leader. It is utterly indispensable. Why? Because vision leads the leader. It paints the target. It sparks and fuels the fire within, and draws him forward. It is also the fire lighter for others who follow that leader. Show me a leader without vision, and I'll show you someone who isn't going anywhere. At best, he is traveling in circles.

To get a handle on vision and how it comes to be a part of a good leader's life, understand these things:

1. Vision Starts Within

When I'm teaching at conferences, someone will occasionally ask me to give him a vision for his organization. But I can't do it. You can't buy, beg, or borrow vision. It has to come from the inside. For Disney, vision was never a problem. Because of his creativity and desire for excellence, he always saw what *could* be.

If you lack vision, look inside yourself. Draw on your natural gifts and desires. Look to your calling if you have one. And if you still don't sense a vision of your own, then consider hooking up with a leader whose vision resonates with you. Become his partner. That's what Walt Disney's brother, Roy, did. He was a good businessman and leader who could make things happen, but Walt was the one who provided the vision. Together, they made an incredible team.

2. Vision Draws on Your History

Vision isn't some mystical quality that comes out of a vacuum, as some people seem to believe. It grows from a leader's past and the history of the people around him. That was the case for Disney. But it's true for all leaders. Talk to any leader, and you're likely to discover key events in his past that were instrumental in the creation of his vision.

3. Vision Meets Others' Needs

True vision is far-reaching. It goes beyond what one individual can accomplish. And if it has real value, it does more than just *include* others; it *adds value* to them. If you have a vision that doesn't serve others, it's probably too small.

4. Vision Helps You Gather Resources

One of the most valuable benefits of vision is that it acts like a magnet—attracting, challenging, and uniting people. It also rallies finances and other resources. The greater the vision, the more winners it has the potential to attract. The more challenging the vision, the harder the participants fight to achieve it. Edwin Land, the founder of Polaroid, advised, "The first thing you do is teach the person to feel that the vision is very important and nearly impossible. That draws out the drive in winners."

REFLECTING ON IT

Where does vision come from? To find the vision that is indispensable to leadership, you have to become a good listener. You must listen to several voices.

The Inner Voice

As I have already said, vision starts within. Do you know your life's mission? What stirs your heart? What do you dream about? If what you're pursuing in life doesn't come from a desire within—from the very depths of who you are and what you believe—you will not be able to accomplish it.

The Unhappy Voice

Where does inspiration for great ideas come from? From noticing what *doesn't* work. Discontent with the *status quo* is a great catalyst for vision. Are you on complacent cruise control? Or do you find yourself itching to change your world? No great leader in history has fought to prevent change.

The Successful Voice

Nobody can accomplish great things alone. To fulfill a big vision, you need a good team. But you also need good advice from someone who is ahead of you in the leadership journey. If you want to lead others to greatness, find a mentor. Do you have an adviser who can help you sharpen your vision?

The Higher Voice

Although it's true that your vision must come from within, you shouldn't let it be confined by your limited capabilities. A truly valuable vision must have God in it. Only He knows your full capabilities. Have you looked beyond yourself, even beyond your own lifetime, as you've sought your vision? If not, you may be missing your true potential and life's best for you.

BRINGING IT HOME

To improve your vision, do the following:

•*Measure yourself.* If you have previously thought about the vision for your life and articulated it, measure how well you are carrying it out. Talk to several key people, such as your spouse, a close friend, and key employees, asking them to state what they think your vision is. If *they* can articulate it, then *you* are probably living it.

•*Write it down.* If you've thought about your vision but never put it in writing,

take the time to do it today. Writing clarifies your thinking. Once you've written it, evaluate whether it is worthy of your life's best. And then pursue it with all you've got.

- D*o a gut check.* If you haven't done a lot of work on vision, spend the next several weeks or months thinking about it. Consider what really impacts you at a gut level.

  What makes you cry? _____

  What makes you dream? _____

  What gives you energy? _____

  Also think about what you'd like to see change in the world around you. What do you see that isn't—but could be? Once your ideas start to become clearer, write them down and talk to a mentor about them.

DAILY TAKE-AWAY

From 1923 to 1955, Robert Woodruff served as president of Coca-Cola. During that time, he wanted Coca-Cola to be available to every American serviceman around the world for five cents, no matter what it cost the company. What a bold goal! But it was nothing compared to the bigger picture he could see in his mind's eye. In his lifetime, he wanted every person in the *world* to have tasted Coca-Cola. When you look deep into your heart and soul for a vision, what do *you* see?

CONCLUSION

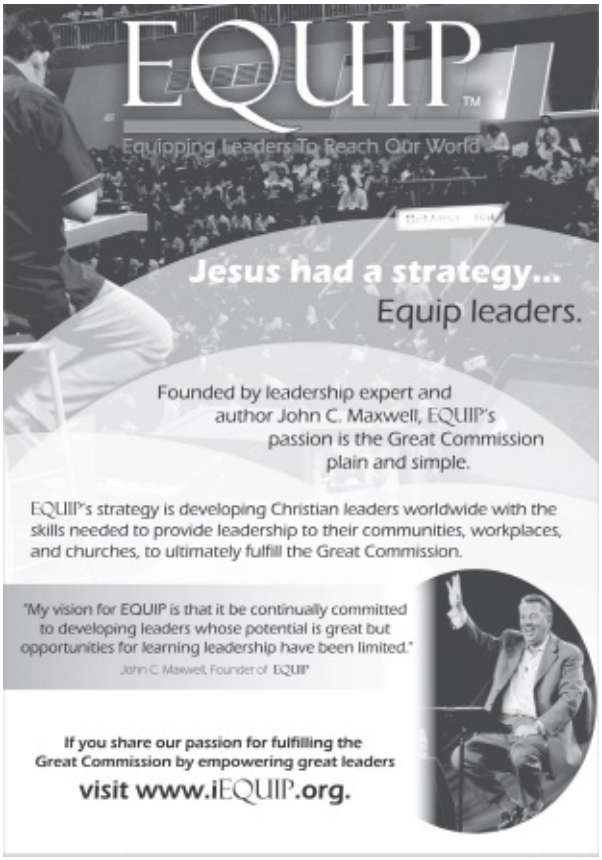
I hope you have enjoyed reading *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* and have benefited from doing the exercises in the "Bringing It Home" section of each chapter. These assignments are designed to help you get a handle on each quality and start you on the process of continuous personal growth in your life.

I want to encourage you to keep growing as a leader. Review this book periodically to measure how you're developing. And put yourself on a regular program where you consistently read books, listen to tapes, and attend conferences that stretch you.

I also want to encourage you to find other leaders who will mentor you in person or through books and tapes. The only way to become the kind of leader that people *want* to follow is to keep growing and learning about leadership. Good luck in your journey.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOHN C. MAXWELL is an internationally recognized leadership expert, speaker, and author who has sold over 13 million books. His organizations have trained more than 2 million leaders worldwide. Dr. Maxwell is the founder of EQUIP and INJOY Stewardship Services. Every year he speaks to Fortune 500 companies, international government leaders, and audiences as diverse as the United States Military Academy at West Point, the National Football League, and ambassadors at the United Nations. A *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Business Week* best-selling author, Maxwell was named the World's Top Leadership Guru by Leadershipgurus.net. He was also one of only 25 authors and artists named to Amazon.com's 10th Anniversary Hall of Fame. Three of his books, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, Developing the Leader Within You,* and *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* have each sold over a million copies.


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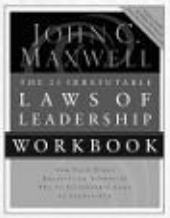
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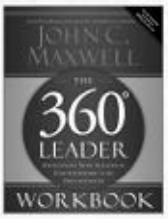
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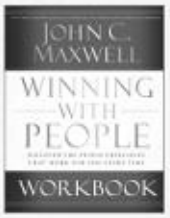
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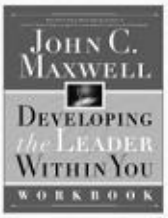
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