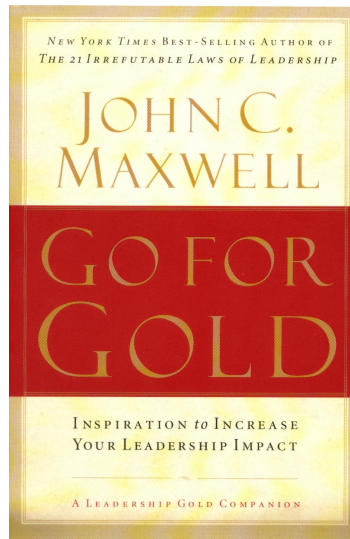


# Go for Gold

## Inspiration to Increase Your Leadership Impact



**Written by:** John C. Maxwell  
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### About John Maxwell:



Called the nation's foremost expert on leadership, **John Maxwell** was born in central Ohio five and a half decades ago. He credits his excellent leadership instincts and his early leadership training to his father, Melvin

Maxwell, whom he followed into the ministry. For over twenty-five years, John led churches in Indiana, Ohio, and California.

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

<http://www.johnmaxwell.com/>

### ■ The Big Idea

If you've read any of John C. Maxwell's books on leadership, you know that leadership is developed daily, not in a day. That's why he's written "Go for Gold", a daily companion to Leadership Gold. It's designed to help supercharge your growth as a leader.

"Go for Gold" offers daily bite-sized leadership lessons taken from Dr. Maxwell's catalog of leadership and personal development books.

Organized into twenty-six weekly lessons with space for you to jot down notes from your own leadership journey, "Go for Gold" will help you jump-start your leadership growth with wisdom and best practices from John C. Maxwell.

## ■ Why You Need This Book

This book will provide you with mentoring and encouragement on leadership drawn from the best of John Maxwell's other books. You can't become a great leader overnight, but you can become a better leader day by day with this book.

## ■ If It's Lonely at the Top, You're Not Doing Something Right

*"Make an appointment to get to know someone on your team today."*

One of the best ways to get to know people is to see them outside of the business world.

People are usually on their guard at work. By getting to know them in other settings, you can get to know who they really are. Try to learn as much as you can about the people and do your best to win their hearts. If you first find their hearts, they'll be glad to give you their hands.

## ■ The Toughest Person to Lead is Always Yourself

*"What must you change in yourself to become a better leader?"*

People who often experience relational difficulties are tempted to look at everyone but themselves to explain the problem. But we must always begin by examining ourselves and being willing to change whatever deficiencies we have.

Critic Samuel Johnson advised that "he who has so little knowledge of human nature as to seek happiness by changing anything but his own disposition will waste his life in fruitless effort and multiply the grief which he purposes to remove."

## ■ Defining Moments Define Your Leadership

*"Make the decision to get up and bounce back today."*

Paul J. Meyer, founder of the Success Motivation Institute, says, "Ninety percent of those who fail are not actually defeated. They simply quit."

That's what discouragement can do to you if you don't handle it the right way – it can cause you to quit. Since you will become discouraged at some point, the question is, *Are you going to give up or get up?*

And your answer to that question will be a defining moment for your leadership. It will become that which you and your leadership become known by and known for. So make sure you make the right decision!

## ■ When You Get Kicked in the Rear

*"Are you growing in such a way that you are better equipped to deal with your problems?"*

Not only do people overcome obstacles to become successful, even after they have achieved a level of success, they continue to face problems.

The bad news is that the higher a person goes – personally and professionally – the more complicated his or her life gets. The good news is that if he or she continues to grow and develop him- or herself, his or her ability to deal with those problems and to potentially overcome them will also increase.

## ■ Never Work a Day in Your Life

*"Dare to dream and act on that dream."*

Oliver Wendell Homes noted, "The great thing in this world is not so much where we are but in what direction we are moving."

This is also one of the great things about having a dream. You can pursue your dream no matter where you are today. And what happened in the past isn't as important as what lies ahead in the future. As the saying goes "No matter what a person's past may have been, his future is spotless." You can begin pursuing your dream today!

## ■ The Best Leaders are Listeners

*"Listen with the purpose of understanding today, and benefit from the knowledge, experience, and perspective of others."*

It's really a matter of attitude. The people with charisma, those who attract others to themselves, are individuals who focus on others, not themselves.

They ask questions of others. They listen. They don't try to be the center of attention. And they never try to pretend they're perfect.

## ■ Get in the Zone and Stay There

*"Ask someone on your team to share their dream with you today."*

If someone thinks enough of you to tell you about his or her dreams, take care. Actress Candice Bergen commented, "Dreams are, by definition, cursed with short life spans."

There are people who don't like to see others pursuing their dreams. It reminds them of how far they are from living their own dreams. As a result, they try to knock down anyone who is shooting for the stars. Also, by talking others out of their dreams, critical people excuse themselves for staying in their comfort zones.

Never expose yourself to dream killers – or allow yourself to become one.

## ■ A Leader's First Responsibility is to Define Reality

*"Separate your predicaments from your problems today,  
and deal with them accordingly."*

Philosopher Abraham Kaplan makes a distinction between problems and predicaments. A problem is something you can do something about. If you can't do something about it, then it's a predicament, something that must be coped with, endured.

To see problems in the right light, you can use this guide:

- P**redictors – helping to mold our future
- R**eminders – showing us that we cannot succeed alone
- O**pportunities – pulling us out of ruts, prompting creative thinking
- B**lessings – opening doors we would otherwise not go through
- L**essons – providing instruction with each new challenge
- E**verywhere – telling us that no one is excluded from difficulties
- M**essages – warning us about potential disaster
- S**olvable – reminding us that every problem has a solution

## ■ To See How the Leader is Doing, Look at the People

*"Ask no more of others than you are asking of yourself."*

We need to remember that when people follow us, they can only go as far as we go. If our growth stops, our ability to lead will stop along with it.

Neither personality nor methodology can substitute for personal growth. We cannot model what we do not possess.

Begin learning and growing today, and watch those around you begin to grow. As a leader, be a follower of great principles and other great leaders.

## ■ Don't Send Your Ducks to Eagle School

*"Look for clues that someone on your team could be better placed."*

Trying to get the right person in the right job can take a lot of time and energy. Isn't it easier for a leader to just put people where it is most convenient and get on with the work?

Once again, this is an area where leaders' desire for action works against them. Fight against your natural tendency to simply make a quick and easy decision and move on. Don't be afraid to move people around if they're not shining the way you think they could. Take time out to determine where they'd be best placed and put them there.

## ■ Keep Your Mind on the Main Thing

*"Develop goals that will initiate motivation and create momentum."*

Goals not only help you develop initial motivation by making your dreams obtainable, but they also help you continue to be motivated – and that creates momentum. Once you get going on the success journey, it will be very hard to stop you. So make use of goals and targets to keep you motivated, not just at the start but all throughout!

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

*"Look for ways to praise your people's mistakes  
and help them learn from them today."*

Here is an acronym to help you keep mistakes in perspective. Mistakes are:

**M**istakes that give us feedback about life.  
**I**nterruptions that should cause us to reflect and think.  
**S**ignposts that direct us to the right path.  
**T**ests that push us toward greater maturity.  
**A**wakenings that keep us in the game mentally.  
**K**eywords that we can use to unlock the next door of opportunity.  
**E**xplorations that let us journey where we've never been before.  
**S**tatements about our development and progress.

## ■ Don't Manage Your Time – Manage Your Life

*"How well are you leading yourself at home?"*

You can do everything right at work and manage yourself well there, but if your personal life is a mess, it will eventually turn everything else sour. What would it profit a leader to climb to the top of the organizational chart, only to lose a marriage or alienate the children?

Success should be defined like this: Having those closest to you love and respect you the most. That is what is most important. Don't sacrifice those things for success at work.

## ■ Keep Learning to Keep Leading

*"Do you think you have 'arrived,'  
or do you maintain an attitude of teachability?"*

The ability to learn from mistakes has value not just in business, but in all aspects of life. Because making mistakes is the only way we learn and improve ourselves. Real boats rock – people who don't make mistakes simply don't learn and thus cannot at all improve themselves.

If you live to learn, then you will really learn to live. If not, you will doom yourself to mediocrity and stagnation – even if you think you already excel at your craft. And there is no way you will be able to lead your team or company if you are not open to learning and improving.

## ■ Leaders Distinguish Themselves during Tough Times

*"It may sound ironic, but if you've failed a lot, celebrate."*

If you have experienced a lot of failure, you are actually in a better position to achieve success than people who haven't.

When you fail, and fail, and fail again – and keep getting back up on your feet and keep learning from your failures – you are building strength, tenacity, experience, and wisdom. As long as you don't give up, you're in a really good place.

## ■ People Quit People, Not Companies

*"Examine your motivation for leading others today."*

It is true that those who would be great must be like the least and the servant of all. 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. Because if you treat people like you are on the highest level and everyone else is beneath you, be prepared, because they will head elsewhere to avoid working with you.

## ■ Experience is Not the Best Teacher

*"Carve out some time today to reflect on recent mistakes you've made."*

It's difficult to give general guidelines about how to learn from mistakes because every situation is different. But if you maintain a teachable attitude as you approach the process and try to learn *anything* you can about what you could do differently, you will improve yourself.

When a person has the right mind-set, every obstacle introduces him to himself.

## ■ The Secret to a Good Meeting is the Meeting before the Meeting

*"When you meet with others, seek to add value to them."*

Often the difference between a good idea and a great idea is the value added to it during the collaborative thinking process. Always try to bring something of value to the table when you meet with your boss.

If you don't, at the end of the day you just may get a note from the boss. Only yours will be a pink slip.

## ■ Be a Connector, Not Just a Climber

*"Take responsibility for earning trust with your followers."*

People will not follow a leader they do not trust. It is the leader's responsibility to actively develop that trust in him from the people around him. Trust is built on many things:

- Time.** Take time to listen and give feedback on performance.
- Respect.** Give someone respect and he will return it with trust.
- Unconditional Positive Regard.** Show acceptance of the person.
- Sensitivity.** Anticipate feelings and needs of the potential leader.
- Touch.** Give encouragement – handshake, high five, pat on the back.

## ■ The Choices You Make, Make You

*"Take complete responsibility for the choices you are making."*

The longer you live, the more your life is shaped by your choices. You decide what you will eat. You choose which friends to spend time with. You choose whether to finish high school, whether you will go to college, who you will marry, what you will do for a living.

The longer you live, the more choices you make – and the more responsible you are for how your life is turning out. You may have had a really tough time. You may have faced



extreme hardship or suffered terrible tragedies. However, your choices are still your choice.

### ■ Influence Should be Loaned but Never Given

*"Consider how your mind-set – of either scarcity or abundance – is impacting your leadership."*

You get from life what you expect. You can hoard what little you have and receive no more. Or you can give what you have, and you will be rewarded with abundance. Your attitude makes the difference.

So if you partner with another person and give generously, one way or another you're going to get back more than you gave.

### ■ For Everything You Gain, You Give Up Something

*"Is what you want worth what you must give up to get it?"*

Management expert Tom Peters gives a perspective on this. He suggests, "Don't rock the boat. Sink it and start over."

If you desire to be creative and do something really innovative, that's sometimes what it takes. You must destroy the old to create something new. You cannot allow yourself to be paralyzed by the idea of change.

### ■ Those Who Start the Journey with You Seldom Finish With You

*"As you face challenges, think about who you can enlist to come alongside you."*

If you do everything alone and never partner with other people, you create huge barriers to your own potential. For the person trying to do everything alone, the game really is over.

If you want to do something big, you must link up with others. One is much too small a number to achieve greatness. You don't know everything and cannot be an expert at

more than a few things – and it always takes a lot of expertise and experience to achieve anything great.

## **■ Few Leaders are Successful Unless a Lot of People Want Them to Be**

*"Tell the members of your team why they are valuable to you."*

It's not a sign of weakness to let others know you value them. It's a sign of security and strength.

When you're honest about your need for help, specific with others about the value they add, and inclusive of others as you build a team to do something bigger than you are, everybody wins.

## **■ You Only Get Answers to the Questions You Ask**

*"Be the first to take responsibility for finding answers when things go wrong for your team."*

People who blame others for their failures never overcome them. They just keep moving from problem to problem, and as a result, they never experience success.

To reach your potential, as has already been brought up, you must continually improve yourself – and you can't do that if you don't take responsibility for your actions and learn from your mistakes.

## **■ People Will Summarize Your Life in One Sentence – Pick It Now**

*"Develop leaders who will develop other leaders, not just followers."*

In hospital emergency rooms, nurses have a saying: "Watch one, do one, teach one." It refers to the need to learn a technique quickly, jump right in and do it with a patient, and then turn around and pass it on to another nurse.

The mentoring process for developing leaders works in a similar way. It happens when you take potential leaders under your wing, develop them, empower them, share with

them how to become persons of influence, and then release them to go out and raise up other leaders. Every time you do that, you plant seeds for greater success.

And as the novelist Robert Louis Stevenson advised, "Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant."

Leave a good legacy for which you will always be remembered.

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