

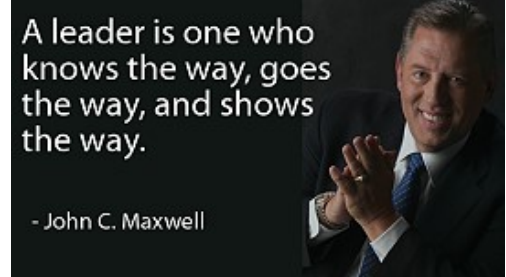
# VENTURING MAGAZINE

LeaderThoughts #22 by Michael Brown

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## John C Maxwell

Go to any bookstore and in the business section will probably be a whole shelf of books by **John C. Maxwell**. His works on leadership and related areas are widely popular. He has been a major writer on not just on leadership topics, but related areas of relationships, attitude and "equipping". He founded EQUIP and the John Maxwell Company ([www.johnmaxwell.com](http://www.johnmaxwell.com)), both of which focus on the training of leaders. And all this while being a minister. Youtube has several videos of his, and I'll point out a few I found valuable.



A little background on Maxwell. He is an evangelical Christian pastor, author and leadership trainer. He continues to both preach (tho not full time) as well as write and speak on the concepts of leadership. His faith does color his works, and this may put some people off, so be advised of this.

Another aspect of his works is that he focuses on teaching concepts and more importantly, helping people developing these matters in their own lives. So most of this works have sections aimed at helping people do so. This is something that is frankly rare in other leadership works. Most that do this usually do so in separate (and purchasable) works. He is not what I would call a researcher of leadership, but more of someone who has learned leadership, observed it, and is able to turn around and teach others what he has learned.

Our focus in this Notes will be on his major leadership works. Probably his most well-known work now is *The 21 Laws of Leadership* (1998; 2007), which recently came out in a 10th Anniversary edition. It also has a companion workbook (as noted, several of his works do, aimed at helping people develop the skills covered in the book). Each law is explained by real-life examples. Some of these examples show how successful some have been by following the law, others by what happens when one does not. After the example, we get further explanation of the concept, and then a short piece on how to apply the law into our daily lives. The book itself ends with 2 appendices: one to evaluate yourself and then a section of selected readings to improve yourself with each of the 21 Laws.

Most of the laws should not be a surprise. Maxwell believes that fundamentally, leadership is INFLUENCE (which is pretty much what we said back in one of the first Notes). This is shown in the Law of Influence: the True Measure of Leadership is Influence- Nothing More, Nothing Less. Others are also obvious, like the Law of Empowerment (a concept we touched on in another Notes), the Law of Priorities (which is why time management and goal setting is so important), and the Law of Victory (which is about making sure the team wins).

One of the new Laws in the new edition is the Law of Addition. The subtext may make that one clearer: "Leaders add value by Serving Others". This is basically the concept of servant-leadership, and is illustrated by the conduct of one of the founders of Costco.

Here is a great video interview about the book: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70skQqbGtPs>

A sort of companion work is *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* (1999). The qualities given should not be a surprise. They include things like character, commitment, communication, focus, responsibility, and vision. Each quality is illustrated, along with usually 4 points about it. Then there is a reflection on it, how to improve it in yourself, and a daily take-away.

With his book *The 360° Leader* (2006), I wondered if this was a topic that would be of interest or use to Venturers. I have not gone over the book myself. Its focus is on 'middle managers', or people within an organization: not at the top or at the bottom. The concept of "360°" is that the leader would need to work with those above them, their peers, and those they lead. For Venturers, the way to approach this is as a leader in your crew you have those you lead, those you work with (your leader peers) and those above you (both the adult advisors, as well as Venturers working at the council and/or district levels). The following is a great video that explains the importance of this work:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4HvWxHkHiU>

*The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork* (2001) and *The 17 Essential Qualities of a Team Player* (2002) are Maxwell's main works on teamwork. They follow a similar style as the 2 works on law/qualities of leaders. Some of the laws are concepts such as everyone having a place (Law of the Niche), the importance of a vision (Law of the Compass) and values (Law of Identity), the issue of bad attitudes (Law of the Bad Apple), and the importance of goals (Law of Big Picture). Similar to the 21 Laws, each section wraps up with a teamwork thought, and a short brief on how to be a better team member and team leader. With the 17 qualities, you have concepts such as committed, collaborative, dependable and the like. The layout is just like the leadership qualities work with its 4 point fleshing out, followed by a reflection, how to improve, and then the daily take away. Please note that this is qualities of a team MEMBER, not a team leader. Too often I find that in speaking of teams we focus too much on the leaders and not the members and their importance to the success of the team.

His *Developing the Leader Within You* (1993) is actually his first leadership work, and is still very popular. It is in this work that he lays out his foundational views on leadership. He sets down that leadership is ultimately influence, and lays out the 5 Levels of leadership (more fully exposed in a more recent work). Other principles of this work are that integrity is the important part of leadership, and having a vision is the indispensable quality of leadership. In many ways, those wishing to delve into Maxwell's work would do well to start with this one.

*Developing the Leaders Around You* came later, and as the title indicated, is about develop those you are engaged with to become leaders. I have yet to go thru this work.

Here is a video on this work: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0x6pgr47Qro>

*Leadership Gold* (2008) is a recent book, billed as lessons he's learned from leading. This is not a unified work like *Developing the Leader Within You*. Each of its nearly 30 chapters are more or less stand alone, and can be used as a learning experience. Some of the lessons include concepts such as the best leaders are listeners, a leader's first responsibility is to define reality (remember Max DePree?), keep learning to keep leading, people quit people not companies, and more. All follow a basic structure. The concept is given, and expanded upon. This is followed by 3 application exercise and then a mentoring moment.

A video on this work: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0A9AtToUsg>

The *5 Levels of Leadership* (2011) is his most recent work. It expands upon and focuses on the concept of 5 levels of leadership introduced in *Developing the Leaders Within You*. This concept should not be confused with Jim Collins' Level 5 Leadership. In Maxwell's concept, the 5 levels are levels that leaders can and should be moving thru. All start at level 1. The goal is to get to level 5, tho most only move up a level or two.

I found on John Maxwell's site a list of recommended books for young readers, along with a video (<http://youtu.be/Q2T4m78Q8pE>) explaining the importance of these works (and for reading by young readers). The books, instead of being among his leadership works are works in other area. These are the works:

- *The Difference Maker*
- *Talent Is Never Enough*
- *Failing Forward*
- *Today Matters*
- *Winning with People*
- *Your Road Map for Success*

I have not read over these works, but hopefully these may be of value to our Venturers. Perhaps Venturers could read these and submit reports on them. (if you watch the video, you will understand...)

Another good resource is The John Maxwell Company: <http://www.johnmaxwell.com>

Overall, I found his works a great asset. The fact that all of it is geared to learning and applying the concept, and less on theory, there is much here that could be applied within our program. Another thing is that a creative advisor could easily use these books for a whole series of lectures or training on leadership. Each law/quality/concept could be a training session in its own right, even if just a short one.

