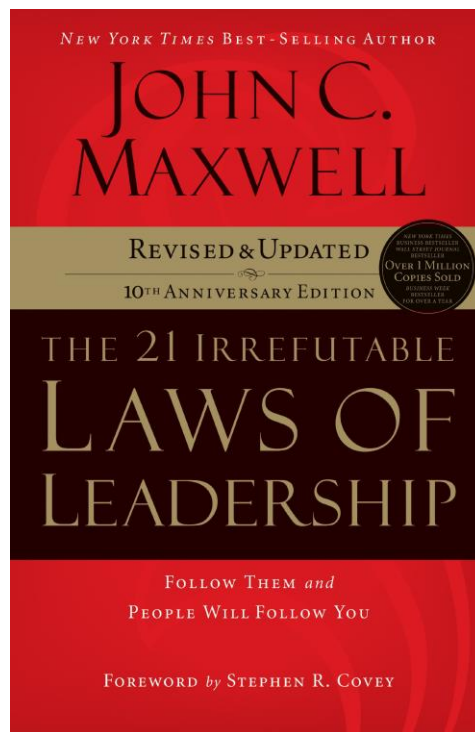


Leadership in the Secular World 21 Laws and More

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Abstract

This paper discusses *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* by John Maxwell from a perspective of intercultural living and communication. Religious and social service in the Philippines undertaken by the author of this article provides meaningful insights and these are applied to elucidate the usefulness and applicability of these 21 laws for intercultural living and communication.

Key words: 21 laws of leadership, intercultural living, intercultural communication, religious and social service

John Maxwell's Insights

John Maxwell is known all over the world for his insightful descriptions of leadership laws. Millions have benefited from reading his books of self-help, self-discipline and work ethic, which mold leadership and enable us to be leaders in our own domains. His active involvement as a pastor continues, but his writings are couched in a language and style which employ religion-neutral terms and this helps draw millions from the secular world to read his books and benefit from his teaching.

Demands of Globalization on Nations and Individuals

No nation is free from the impact of globalization in the present world. No community can afford to ignore the trends in globalization. No individual can aspire to promote his or her own career without leadership qualities and solid work ethic. It is not just the competition that forces us to acquire true and abiding skills throughout our life. In the very nature of life these days, there is an insistence upon all of us to be conscious about what we need to do ourselves to improve our skills, income and ways of living. More than ever, success in life is now seen to be possible only if the individuals take adequate initiative to achieve it. In some respects, this focus only on individual effort is an unfortunate turn in our world view, but current trends of globalization of economy, services, education and so on seem to move in this direction.

Restoration of Balance

As a social and religious worker serving rural communities in the Philippines for over two decades, I always admired the strength of social commitment in these communities. Even as social needs are attended to, individuals were/are not left behind. With the urbanization and globalization of every activity including business and education, there seems to be an

uneven balance these days. I believe that the leadership qualities identified and described by Maxwell will give a sense of balance to the communities and the individuals impacted by globalization.



Courtesy: <http://www.n2growth.com/blog/leadership-interview-john-maxwell/>

John Maxwell's Life Sentence

John Maxwell has a mandate, a "life sentence" as he describes it, "to add value to leaders who will multiply value to others" (p.258). In this 10th anniversary edition of his classic leadership manual, Maxwell elaborates on an updated list of laws that govern the effectiveness of leaders. He presents 21 laws and brands them "irrefutable".

1. The Law of the Lid

"The Law of the Lid" is basically a defense of the idea that leadership has a direct correlation to the effectiveness of any organization. Negative consequences will occur if a leader attempts to lead in any way that is contrary to any of these laws. Leadership is a type of ceiling, cap or lid to growth, which impacts the people serving under him.

2. The Law of Influence

"The Law of Influence" brings clarity to what leadership is supposed to do: be a compelling force for positive change. "The best way to test whether a person can lead rather than just manage is to ask him to create positive change. Managers can maintain direction,

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but often they can't change it." (p.14) Mother Theresa was used as an example of how someone does not need position, wealth or heritage to be a true leader. Influence, and therefore leadership, comes from at least seven factors: 1) Character – Who they are, 2) Relationships – Who they know, 3) Knowledge – What they know, 4) Intuition – What they feel, 5) Experience – Where they've been, 6) Past Success – What they've done, and 7) Ability – What they can do (p.16-18).

3. The Law of Process

“The Law of Process” emphasizes that there is no quick fix or instant method of becoming a better leader. But one should be encouraged to look at such learning as a habit of life, and that the rewards are similar to compounding interest on an investment. Being able to continue to develop and improve one's self, especially the qualities of leadership mentioned in this book, is what will make one a leader instead of a follower. It is easier to emphasize events over processes, much like a Christian's sanctification. Each has their place, but there are distinct differences. “An event – Encourages decisions, motivates people, is a calendar issue, challenges people, is easy; A process – Encourages development, matures people, is a culture issue, changes people, is difficult...If I need to be inspired to take steps forward, then I'll attend an event. If I want to improve, then I'll engage in a process and stick with it.” (p.26)

4. The Law of Navigation

“The Law of Navigation” uses the illustration of a journey to demonstrate that “A leader is one who sees more than others see, who sees farther than others see, and who sees before others do.” (p.38) Practices of a good navigator include drawing on past experience, examining conditions before making commitments, listening to what others have to say and making sure their conclusions represent both faith and fact. “The secret to the Law of Navigation is preparation.” (p.45)

5. The Law of Addition

“The Law of Addition” means that the leader is fulfilling his role when those who work with him genuinely benefit, grow, or have value ADDED by working with him. We add value to others when we: 1) Truly value others, 2) Make ourselves more valuable to others, 3) Know and relate to what others value (“Listen...learn...lead”), and 4) Do things that God values.

6. The Law of Solid Ground

“The Law of Solid Ground” is a challenge to leaders to examine their character to see if they are trustworthy. Maxwell says, “How important is trust for a leader? It is THE MOST IMPORTANT THING” (p.61). So while developing professional skills is important, it is MORE important to focus on qualities of integrity, authenticity and discipline. “To develop your integrity, make a commitment to yourself to be scrupulously honest. Don’t shave the truth, don’t tell white lies, and don’t fudge numbers. Be truthful even when it hurts. To develop authenticity, be yourself with everyone. Don’t play politics, role play, or pretend to be anything you’re not. To strengthen your discipline, do the right things every day regardless of how you feel.” (p.70)

7. The Law of Respect

“The Law of Respect” is a true test of leadership because the qualities that define it have been demonstrated. Harriet Tubman was given as an example of one who would have been an unlikely candidate for leadership, but by acting as a leader in the Underground Railroad movement to free slaves, she earned the respect of friends and enemies alike. Ways leaders gain others’ respect is: 1) Possessing natural leadership ability, 2) Respecting others (Pattern – “When people respect you as a person, they admire you. When they respect you as a friend, they love you. When they respect you as a leader, they follow you.”), 3) Acting courageously (“A leader does not deserve the name unless he is willing occasionally to stand

alone.”), 4) Demonstrating success, 5) Relating to others in a loyal manner, 6) Adding value to others (p.79-81).

8. The Law of Intuition

“The Law of Intuition” is probably the most difficult to learn because it flows out of a mindset, a view of the world, that is made up of innumerable ideas, experiences and natural tendencies. Maxwell says that “People are intuitive in their area of strength” (p.88), so a naturally gifted leader sees situations, trends, resources, people and themselves from a paradigm of leadership. Intuition is needed due to the complexity of factors that impact decisions related to change. And since “Improvement is impossible without change,” (p.99) a leader must often make decisions without being able to take into conscious consideration all the factors that impact the truth of a situation. Any evaluation like this must include the “gut instinct” every leader has or has nurtured.

9. The Law of Magnetism

“The Law of Magnetism” is a law that explains the nature of most of the people who work with you. In missions, this is the “homogeneous” principle, the truth that people like to be with people who are most like themselves. It is these “common ground” characteristics that challenge leaders to be better leaders because “The better leader you are, the better leaders you will attract.” (p.110) Common ground characteristics include: 1) Generation, 2) Attitude, 3) Background, 4) Values, 5) Energy, 6) Giftedness, and 7) Leadership ability.

10. The Law of Connection

“The Law of Connection” is really a law of communication and relationship. It is the leader’s responsibility to take initiative to make these connections as was demonstrated by the example of George Bush – Good after 9/11, Bad after Hurricane Katrina. Guidelines for connecting include: 1) Connect with yourself first, 2) Communicate with openness and sincerity, 3) Know your audience, 4) Live your message, 5) Go to where they are, 6) Focus

on them, not yourself, 7) Believe in them, 8) Offer direction and hope (Napoleon- “Leaders are dealers in hope”).

11. The Law of the Inner Circle

“The Law of the Inner Circle” deals with the reality that all leaders have limited capacity so the only way to increase capacity is to multiply companions. Mother Theresa is quoted as saying, “You can do what I cannot do. I can do what you cannot do. Together we can do great things.” (p.129) Who are these people, and who SHOULD they be? Questions to determine qualifications for your inner circle include: 1) Do they have high influence with others? 2) Do they bring a complementary gift to the table? 3) Do they hold a strategic position in the organization? 4) Do they add value to me and to the organization? (“As iron sharpens iron, friends sharpen the minds of each other” [Proverbs 27:17]) 5) Do they positively impact other inner circle members?

12. The Law of Empowerment

“The Law of Empowerment” is a test of the self-confidence of a leader because it means surrendering control, which is normally based on one’s position. Two children’s games were used as examples of the natural tendency to command control and lead by virtue of position. “King of the hill” (knock all others down so you can stay on top of the hill and lead) and “Follow the leader” (do things others can’t do to separate yourself from them and therefore become more powerful) are each contrary to the Law of Empowerment. Theodore Roosevelt said, “The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it.” (p.144)

Some barriers to empowering others include: 1) Desire for job security (paradox of this Law- “the only way to make yourself indispensable is to make yourself dispensable”), 2) Resistance to change (“Change is the price of progress. That’s not always easy to live with.”),

and 3) Lack of self-worth (p.146-148). By believing in people and entrusting them with both responsibility and authority, you, your organization and those empowered will benefit by expanding capacity.

13. The Law of the Picture

“The Law of the Picture” describes a principle that any good vision needs to be demonstrated by the leader in order to be embraced by others. It is untrue that a leader only needs to be a visionary, “Great leaders always seem to embody two seemingly disparate qualities. They are both highly visionary and highly practical.” (p.158) Maxwell suggest four modeling insights for leaders to remember: 1) Followers are always watching what you do, 2) It’s easier to teach what’s right than to do what’s right (Norman Vincent Peale – “Nothing is more confusing than people who give good advice but set a bad example”; leaders should be tour guides [taking people with them], not travel agents [telling people where they can go]), 3) We should work on changing ourselves before trying to improve others, 4) The most valuable gift a leader can give is being a good example. New York’s Mayor Rudy Giuliani modeled leadership after 9/11, which served as an inspiration, bringing hope to his city and the whole nation.

14. The Law of Buy-In

“The Law of Buy-In” establishes the chronology for a leader’s attention. Without first possessing qualities worthy of emulation and demonstrating a commitment to the vision, no grand vision (however well communicated) will touch the hearts and minds of others. Without Gandhi’s example of non-violence (which brought independence to India, inspired Martin Luther King, Jr. to do the same in the United States and eventually Cory Aquino in the Philippines through “People Power”), his compatriots would not have followed him. The principle is that “The leader finds the dream and then the people. The people find the leader and then the dream.” (p.170)

15. The Law of Victory

“The Law of Victory” defines the attitude a leader must have – an unwillingness to accept defeat. Winston Churchill is put forth as an example, “You ask, ‘What is our aim?’ I can answer in one word: Victory – victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival.” The mindset of such a leader is this: “Leadership is responsible. Losing is unacceptable. Passion is unquenchable. Creativity is essential. Quitting is unthinkable. Commitment is unquestionable. Victory is inevitable.” (p.183) This does not mean that every battle or project must conform to a leader’s exact expectation, but accepting the mandate to succeed must be wholly embraced by a leader to be effective.

16. The Law of the Big Mo

“The Law of the Big Mo” demonstrates the compounding aspect of leadership done well. Momentum in a positive direction has multiple benefits, although negative direction also compounds negatively, just like borrowing money. It tends to exaggerate whatever characterizes the success or failure of an athlete, artist or businessman. When things are going well, momentum makes leaders look better than they are. Maxwell himself admits he has momentum – “Often I say that when I started my career, I wasn’t a bad as people thought. Today, I’m not as good as people give me credit for.” (p.199)

Momentum actually allows any performer to excel beyond their normal capacity. Following Newton’s first law of motion (Law of inertia - objects at rest tend to stay at rest, but objects in motion tend to stay in motion), it is far easier to direct anyone or group if momentum is working in your favor than if things are standing still. This makes momentum the most powerful quality to incorporate change. Momentum mustn’t be thought of as some

mystical feeling; it is the leader's responsibility to do all he can to facilitate it, and it must begin within himself.

17. The Law of Priorities

“The Law of Priorities” is a principle that seeks to qualify work instead of just quantifying it. The typical American response to “How are you doing?” is usually “Fine”, but often it is “Busy.” That answer will not do for the effective leader. Maxwell suggests that prioritizing qualifies activity, delineating between primary and secondary use of time. Guidelines for determining priorities are “requirement, return, and reward.” (p.210) The first “R” will tell you what you need to do and what others need to do. This demonstrates the value of a clear job description. The second “R” qualifies further what you should focus on among these requirements, which are the areas of your strength and expertise. The third “R” deals with personal satisfaction, which provides a leader with the necessary passion and motivation to keep working.

18. The Law of Sacrifice

“The Law of Sacrifice” draws attention to a truth that is not a pleasant one but is an essential one. Success doesn't come without sacrifice, without giving something else up in order to achieve. A leader must anticipate that others will expect him to demonstrate sacrifice, leading the way in this, giving up privileges and rights whenever necessary. And although there will be seasons of greater or lesser sacrifice, it should be expected to be standard operating procedure. The greatest sacrifice will be required of those with the highest level of leadership (Jesus for example!).

19. The Law of Timing

“The Law of Timing” shows how dramatic consequences can be if a leader delays decisive action or acts prematurely. This is especially true in war or dealing with natural disasters. A leader cannot be expected to lead well in such situations without several

qualities: 1) Understanding – This means pursuing awareness of as much pertinent information as possible, 2) Maturity – A leader must act unselfishly so no one can question his motives, 3) Confidence – This is the outcome of the first two qualities, and the result of previous success, 4) Decisiveness – Once a direction has been decided upon based on the best information available, no alternatives should be considered unless new information is received, 5) Experience – This brings a sense of hope based on a leader’s wisdom or the wisdom of those he trusts, 6) Intuition – This intangible depends on the leader’s practiced ability to read situations, trends, resources and people, and simplifies the complicated, 7) Preparation – The daily discipline a leader must possess will serve him well in the season of trial and equips him to change what needs changing when they need changing.

20. The Law of Explosive Growth

“The Law of Explosive Growth” describes what happens when a leader seeks to multiply leaders. “If you develop yourself, you can experience personal success. If you develop a team, your organization can experience growth. If you develop leaders, your organization can achieve explosive growth.” (p.249)

The difference between addition and multiplication is the way Maxwell illustrates the difference in focus between leaders who attract followers and the ones who develop leaders. To develop leaders, a leader needs to have a commitment to training successors, ones who they can confidently yield their leadership position.

The leader must also concentrate on developing the top 20% of his people, not the weakest ones who clamor for attention due to their neediness. As he does with himself, a leader nurturing leaders focuses on their strengths, not weaknesses. There is no equity in either the time invested or opportunities given between potential leaders and ones without

potential; it is inherently “unfair”. The benefits to such an approach result in multiplied growth and expanded impact.

21. The Law of Legacy

The final law is “The Law of Legacy.” This is the ultimate in long range thinking, for it looks beyond your direct impact and relies completely on your indirect impact into the future. To do this a leader must first decide what he wants people to remember about him and then live life with that objective in mind. Mentoring successors is another big part of this preparation including a surrender of leadership authority and position. Jackie Robinson is quoted in the context of the sacrifices he made while integrating professional baseball - “A life isn’t significant except for its impact on other lives.” (p.264)

Imparting Leadership Skills

Maxwell’s Laws of Leadership are all based on the observation that “Leadership determines the success of the organization.” (p.267) Regardless of one’s level or type of leadership, following these laws should empower anyone to improve their capacity to lead, have a positive impact on those they work with, and therefore also positively impact themselves.

That leadership can be a learned skill must be recognized first, from my point of view. Millions in Africa, Asia and Latin America still continue to suffer in poverty. Millions in a rich nation like the United States also live in poverty. Under such poverty conditions children may have difficulty in taking initiative to become leaders. They need to be taught and encouraged to acquire and assume leadership characteristics.

While scriptural texts help many as part of their upbringing, for example, the leadership model of Jesus with humility, love and suffering and emphasis on hardwork,

sincerity of purpose, sympathy and such everlasting values, many outside the religious domain will have to learn the leadership skills in their schools.

Unfortunately, in my work in Asia both as a religious and social worker, I saw that there was no adequate emphasis on the acquisition of these skills. Traditional values are taught through poetry and recitation of verses. However, these usually remain as text to memorize and pass the examination in schools. At least at the level professional training in colleges and institutes we need to integrate modes of leadership acquisition and demonstration of such skills in actual conditions so that graduates will be ready to enter the job market in global conditions and lead their team and businesses to success even as they serve their community.

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