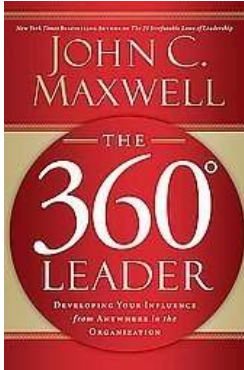


The 360 Leader – Developing Your Influence from Anywhere in the Organization.

John C. Maxwell

A book review by Joey Ng

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'When I get to the top, then I'll learn to lead' – This is one of the 7 myths facing every leader in the middle according to John Maxwell.

The 360 Leader encourages the discipline of leadership to be practiced through-out an organization, more specifically, at the middle management level, and debunking the notion that leadership is only for those at the top. As the title suggest, it is about leadership *with* those around you.

The way the book is structured made it any easy read (6 chapters, each containing several short pointers), offering useful tips and guidelines on how to lead and influence your boss, peers and subordinates. In between, many quotes and stories offered compelling reasons to start empowering ourselves with this skill.

Here are snapshots of strategies I found most useful:

The Myths of Leading from the Middle of an Organization

Myth #2 – 'When I get to the top, then I'll learn to lead'

Good leadership is learned in phases. Leading well wherever they are prepare leaders for more and greater responsibility. Before one wants to succeed, he must learn as much about leadership before being placed in that position. It is when stakes are small and risk are low that one can try out his leadership and decision making skills.

Myth #7 - 'If I can't get to the top, then I won't try to lead'

Reality for most people is that they will never be the CEO. Some gave up leadership because to them, they define success as being 'on top'. Leadership is neither confined to position nor hierarchical standings. If one defines leadership as value adding to self, others and the organization, then he can learn to influence people from any level.

The Challenges 360 Degree Leader Face

Challenge #2 – The Multi-Hat Challenge: One Head... Many Hats

Leaders in the middle deal with expectation from the bottom, the middle and the top of the organization. Each side brings a different sort of challenge to the plate. To handle this challenge, John Maxwell suggested when changing hats, don't change the personality – consistency leads to trustworthiness, and be accountable for all the hats you are wearing.

Challenge #6 – The Vision Challenge: Championing the Vision is more Difficult when you didn't Create it.

If the vision violates your principles or doesn't speak to what you value deep down, leaving may be the most appropriate action. Constructive actions leaders in the middle can adopt include 1) adapting our own values and find ways to align with the vision. 2) Champion the vision and make it a reality. 3) Add value to the vision by going beyond the expectation of the leader and the vision.

The Principles 360 Degree Leaders Practice to Lead Up

Lead-Up Principle #1 – Lead Yourself Exceptionally Well.

In order to lead up, you must first gain credibility, by leading yourself first. The better you are at making sure you're doing what you should be doing, the better chance of you making an impact on others.

What a leader must self manage :

- 1) Manage your emotions – know when to display and delay.
- 2) Manage your time
- 3) Manage your priorities
- 4) Manage your energy
- 5) Manage your thinking – one minute of thinking is often more valuable than one hour of talk or unplanned work.
- 6) Manage your words
- 7) Manage your personal Life

Lead-Up Principle #3 – Be Willing to Do What Others Won't

'You learn resiliency and tenacity during tough assignments, not easy ones. When tough choices have to be made and results are difficult to achieve, leaders are forged.'

Expectations are high for people at the top, low for those at the bottom and mixed in the middle. Those in the middle who do more than is expected from them will stand out.

The Principles 360 Degree Leaders Practice to Lead Across

Lead-Across Principle #5 – Expand your Circle of Acquaintances.

It is about cultivating relationship through investing effort to know more people. Expanding your network with people outside your comfort zone might be uneasy in the beginning, but as your network grows in various directions, so will your knowledge and know-how. The more broadly you are connected, the more likely your views will be respected.

Lead-Across Principle #6 – Let the Best Idea Win

To let the best idea win, you must first generate good ideas and work to make them even better. This is to ensure a high level 'playing field'. Be objective and resist the temptation to fight for your own idea if it is not the best. The whole point about this principle is to bring forth the best idea that would benefit the team or organization, and in the process, display the willingness to listen to other viewpoints, not trying to win friends by letting them win.

The Principles 360 Degree Leaders Practice to Lead Down

Lead-Down Principle #5 – Model the Behavior you Desire

Leaders need to be what they want to see. Followers are influenced by their leaders' values and behaviors, that's why we must always be aware of our own conduct before criticizing the people who work for us.

Lead-Down Principle #7 – Reward for Results

What gets rewarded gets repeated, thus, it is important that the right actions and results are rewarded in the right way. The perception that fairness means rewarding everyone the same is flawed. If someone produces twice more than anyone else in the organization receives the same reward as everyone else, why would he continue to double his output?

The Value of 360 Degree Leaders

Value #3 – Leading Successfully at One Level is a Qualifier for Leading at the Next Level

The key to moving up as an emerging leader is to focus on leading well where you are, not moving up the ladder. Great responsibilities come only after you have handled small ones well because the current level is the resume for the next.

Value #5 – 360 Degree Leaders Possess Quality Every Organization Needs

These are the qualities John Maxwell envisions in a leader:

Adaptability – quickly adjusts to change

Discernment – Understand the real issues

Perspective – sees beyond their own vantage point

Communication – Links to all levels of the organization

Security – Finds identity in self, not position.

Servanthood – Does whatever it takes.

Resourcefulness – Finds creative ways to make things happen

Maturity – puts the team before self

Endurance – remains consistent in character and competence over the long haul

Countability – can be counted on when it counts

Enjoy reading.