

# Becoming a Person of Influence

## How to Positively Impact the Lives of Others

by John C. Maxwell and Jim Dornan

### Making a Difference

Character traits of the highly influential.

#### QUICK OVERVIEW

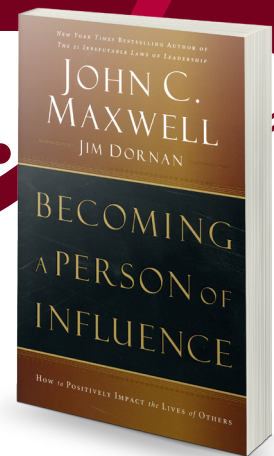
John C. Maxwell and Jim Dornan are renowned for the countless people they have helped mentor to success. This collaborative work shares their personal experiences as well as their best advice for becoming a person of influence. *Becoming a Person of Influence* is appropriate for team leaders, managers, mentors, coaches and those who want to make a positive impact in others' lives.

The leadership experts outline the four progressive steps of influence: modeling, motivating, mentoring and multiplying, and then examines the common qualities of an influential person. This summary focuses on three of the 10 characteristics addressed in *Becoming a Person of Influence*: integrity, listening and enlarging.

#### APPLY AND ACHIEVE

To become a person of influence, you must become a better communicator. One of the primary skills essential for communication is listening. Use the influence checklist below to assess your strengths and weaknesses in regard to listening. If you answer no to any of the following questions, make it a priority to improve in that area.

1. Do I usually look at the speaker while he or she is talking?
2. Do I wait for the speaker to finish talking before I respond?
3. Do I make understanding my goal?
4. Am I usually sensitive to the speaker's immediate need?
5. Do I make it a practice to "check" my emotions?
6. Do I regularly suspend my judgment until I get the whole story?
7. Am I in the practice of summing up what the speaker says at major intervals?
8. Do I ask questions for clarity when needed?
9. Do I communicate to others that listening is a priority?



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#### SUCCESS Points

*In this book you'll learn how to:*

- Progress from a person whose behavior models influence to a person who motivates others
- Add value to others
- Cultivate relationships
- Become a person of integrity

# SUMMARY

## *Becoming a Person of Influence*

**I**ntegrity is about the small things.

If the foundation of integrity is weak or fundamentally flawed, then being a person of influence becomes impossible. Integrity is the quality most needed to succeed in business, and to become a person of influence.

That's why it's crucial to maintain integrity by taking care of the little things. Many people misunderstand that. They think they can do whatever they want when it comes to the small things because they believe that as long as they don't have any major lapses, they're doing well. But that's not the way it works.

Ethical principles are not flexible. A little white lie is still a lie. Theft is theft—whether it's \$1, \$1,000 or \$1 million. Integrity commits itself to character over personal gain, to people over things, to service over power, to principle over convenience, to the long view over the immediate.

When times get tough, it becomes harder to act with integrity, not easier. Character isn't created in crisis; it only comes to light. Everything you have done in the past—and the things you have neglected to do—come to a head when you're under pressure.

### *Integrity Is an Inside Job*

There are three truths about integrity that go against common thinking.

- Integrity is not determined by circumstances.
- Integrity is not based on credentials.
- Integrity is not to be confused with reputation.

In the end, you can bend your actions to conform to your principles, or you can bend your principles to conform to your actions. It's a choice you have to make. If you want to become a person of influence, then you better choose the path of integrity, because all other roads ultimately lead to ruin.

- **Commit Yourself to Honesty, Reliability & Confidentiality**—Integrity begins with a specific, conscious decision. If you wait until a moment of crisis before settling your integrity issues, you set yourself up to fail. Choose today to live by a strict moral code and determine to stick to it no matter what happens.
- **Decide Ahead of Time That You Don't Have a Price**—President George Washington perceived that “few men have the virtue to withstand the highest bidder.” Some people can be bought because they haven't settled the money issue before the moment of temptation. The best way

to guard yourself against a breach in integrity is to make a decision today that you won't sell your integrity: not for power, revenge, pride or money—any amount of money.

- **Major in the Minor Things**—The little things make or break us. If you cross the line of your values—whether it's by an inch or by a mile—you're still out of bounds. Honesty is a habit you ingrain by doing the right thing all the time, day after day, week after week, year after year. If you consistently do what is right in the little things, you're less likely to wander off course morally or ethically.
- **Do What You Should Do Before You Do What You Want to Do**—A big part of integrity is following through consistently on your responsibilities. Our friend Zig Ziglar says, “When you do the things you have to do when you have to do them, the day will come when you can do the things you want to do when you want to do them.”

### *Influence Checklist*

- **Commit yourself to developing strong character.** In the past, have you made it a practice to take full responsibility for your character? It's something you need to do in order to become a person of influence. Set aside the negative experiences you have had, including the difficult circumstances and people who have hurt you. Forget about your credentials or the reputation you've built over the years. Strip all that away, and look at what's left. If you don't see solid integrity in yourself, make the commitment to change today.
- **Do the little things.** Spend the next week carefully monitoring your character habits. Make a note to yourself each time you do any of the following:
  1. Don't tell the whole truth
  2. Neglect to fulfill a commitment, whether it's promised or implied
  3. Leave an assignment uncompleted
  4. Talk about something that you might have been expected to keep in confidence
- **Do what you should do before you do what you want to do.** Every day this week, find two items on your to-do list that you should do but that you have been putting off. Complete those tasks before doing anything on the list that you enjoy.

### A PERSON OF INFLUENCE LISTENS TO PEOPLE

What is the one skill that all great leaders recognize as indispensable to their ability to influence others and succeed? Listening.

A mistake that people often make in communicating is trying very hard to impress the other person. They try to make themselves appear smart, witty or entertaining. But if you want to relate well to others, you have to be willing to focus on what they have to offer. Be *impressed and interested*, not *impressive and interesting*.

**Most people are funny.  
They want to get ahead and  
succeed, but they are reluctant  
to change.**

While it's true that the higher you go, the less you are required to listen to others, it's also true that your need for good listening skills increases. The farther you get from the front lines, the more you have to depend on others to get reliable information.

#### Idea Fountain

When you consistently listen to others, you never suffer for ideas. People love to contribute, especially when their leader shares the credit with them.

Listening builds loyalty. A funny thing happens when you don't make a practice of listening to someone. They find others who will.

On the other hand, practicing good listening skills draws people to you. If you consistently listen to others, valuing them and what they have to offer, they are likely to develop a strong loyalty to you, even when your authority with them is unofficial or informal.

The truth is that effective communication is not persuasion. It's listening. Think about it. Nobody ever *listened* himself or herself out of a sale.

President Abraham Lincoln, considered one of the most effective leaders and communicators in our nation's history,

said, "When I'm getting ready to reason with a man, I spend one-third of my time thinking about myself and what I'm going to say—and two-thirds thinking about him and what he is going to say." That's a good ratio to maintain. Listen about twice as much as you speak.

#### Focus on Understanding

Make it your goal to understand rather than just remember facts. To increase your understanding of others:

- Listen for the message and the message behind the message.
- Listen for both content and feelings.
- Listen for what they are saying and not saying.
- Listen for areas where they are afraid and hurt.
- Sum up at major intervals.

#### Make Listening Your Priority

Jim's wife, Nancy, does a lot of speaking. Not long ago, she gave a talk about listening that emphasized giving other people the benefit of the doubt and trying to see things from their point of view.

In the audience that day was a man named Rodney. Though he was happily married and had a young son, he had been previously married and had two daughters with his first wife. And he was having problems with her. She was constantly calling him and asking for more money for herself and the two girls. They argued continually, and she was driving him so nuts that he had already hired an attorney and was preparing to sue her.

But when Rodney heard Nancy speak about listening that day, he realized how insensitive he had been to his ex-wife, Charlotte. He called and asked if they could meet. Although suspicious, after speaking to her lawyer, Charlotte eventually agreed to see him.

They met at a coffee shop and Rodney said, "Charlotte, I want to listen to you. Tell me what your life is like. I do care about you and the kids."

"I didn't think you cared about the girls at all," she said as she began to cry.

"I do," he said. "I'm sorry. I've only been thinking of myself, and I haven't been thinking of you. Please forgive me. I want to make things right. I've been angry for so long that I couldn't see straight. Now, tell how things are going for you and the girls."

For a while, Charlotte could only sob. But then she began telling him about her struggles as a single parent and how she was doing her best to bring up the girls, but that it didn't seem like enough. They talked for hours, and as they did, the beginning of a new foundation of mutual respect was formed. In time, they believe they will be able to become friends again.

Can you think of people you haven't been listening to lately? What are you going to do about it? It's never too late to become a good listener. It can change your life—and the lives of the people in your life.

## A PERSON OF INFLUENCE ENLARGES PEOPLE

There are people for whom you want to make a difference. Modeling a life of integrity is an important first step in becoming an influencer because it creates a strong foundation with others.

The next natural step is motivating people. As you nurture people, show your faith in them, listen to their hopes and fears, and demonstrate your understanding of them; you build a strong relational connection and give them incentive to succeed—and be influenced by you.

But if you want people to really be able to *really* grow, improve and succeed, you have to take the next step with them. You have to become a mentor to them. Giving people the motivation to grow without also providing them the means of doing it is a tragedy. But the mentoring process offers people the opportunity to turn their potential into reality, their dreams into destiny. Mentors impact eternity because there is no telling where their influence will stop.

Most people don't have a natural knack for spotting their areas of greatest potential. They need help doing that, especially as they begin growing and striving to reach their potential. And that's why it's important for you to become a mentor in the lives of the people you desire to help.

### *When you enlarge others, you:*

**Raise their level of living.** Anytime you help people enlarge themselves in any area of their lives, you benefit them because you make it possible for them to step up to a new level of living. As people develop their gifts and talents, learn new skills and broaden their problem-solving abilities, their quality of living and level of contentment improve dramatically. No one can grow and

remain unaffected in the way he lives his life.

**Increase their capacity for growth.** Enlarging them helps them become better equipped, and it increases their capacity to learn and grow. After being enlarged, whenever they receive a resource or opportunity, they are better able to use it to its greatest benefit. And their growth begins to multiply.

**Increase the potential of your organization.** If many people in your organization improve themselves even slightly, the quality of your whole organization increases.

## Integrity Is Your Best Friend

Abraham Lincoln once stated, "When I lay down the reins of this administration, I want to have one friend left. And that friend is inside myself." You could almost say that Lincoln's integrity was his best friend while he was in office because he was criticized so viciously. Here is a description of what he faced, as explained by Donald T. Phillips:

*Abraham Lincoln was slandered, libeled and hated perhaps more intensely than any man ever to run for the nation's highest office.... He was publicly called just about every name imaginable by the press of the day, including a grotesque baboon, a third-rate country lawyer who once split rails and now splits the Union, a coarse vulgar joker, a dictator, an ape and a buffoon and others. The Illinois State Register labeled him "the craftiest and most dishonest politician that ever disgraced an office in America...." Severe and unjust criticism did not subside after Lincoln took the oath of office, nor did it come only from Southern sympathizers. It came from within the Union itself, from Congress, from some factions within the Republican Party, and, initially, from within his own cabinet. As president, Lincoln learned that, no matter what he did, there were going to be people who were not pleased.*

Through it all, Lincoln was a man of principle. And as Thomas Jefferson wisely said, "God grant that men of principle shall be our principal men."

# SUMMARY

## *Becoming a Person of Influence*

### Listen Up!

Effective communication is not persuasion. It's listening. Think about it. Nobody ever *listened* himself or herself out of a sale.

For some people, especially those with high energy, slowing down enough to really listen can be challenging. Most people tend to speak about 180 words a minute, but they can listen at 300 to 500 words a minute. That disparity can create tension and cause a listener to lose focus.

Most people try to fill up that communication gap by finding other things to do, such as daydream, think about their daily schedule or mentally review their to-do list or watch other people.

It's similar to what we do when we drive a car. We rarely just watch the road and do nothing else. Usually we look at the scenery, eat and drink, talk or listen to the radio.

If you want to become a better listener, however, you need to learn to direct that energy and attention positively by concentrating on the person you're with. Observe body language. Watch for changes in facial expression. Look into the person's eyes. Management expert Peter Drucker remarked, "The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said."

If you expend your extra energy by observing the other person closely and interpreting what he or she says, your listening skills will improve dramatically.

Most people are funny. They want to get ahead and succeed, but they are reluctant to change. They are often willing to grow only enough to accommodate their *problems*, instead, they need to grow enough to achieve their *potential*.

### Make Yourself an Enlarger

For many people, just because they want to enlarge others doesn't necessarily mean they are ready for the task. They usually need to do some work on themselves first. As in most instances, if you want to do more for others, you have to become more yourself. That's never more valid than in the area of mentoring.

You can teach what you know, but you can only reproduce what you are.

In your preparations to take on the task of helping others enlarge themselves, the first thing you need to do is improve and enlarge yourself. Because only when you are growing and enlarging yourself are you able to help others do the same.

To determine whether you are still growing, ask yourself what you're still looking forward to.

### Steps for Taking Others Through the Enlarging Process

- See their potential. Try to discern what they are capable of; look for the spark in them. Watch and listen with your heart.
- Cast a vision for their future. Travel ahead of them in your mind's eye and see their future before they do. You'll become able to cast a vision for their future that helps motivate them.
- Tap into their passion. Everybody, even the quietest person, has a passion about something. You just have to find it.
- Address their character flaws. If you get to know people well enough to know how they react in most situations, you'll have an idea where any character shortcomings might be.
- Focus on their strengths. Sharpen skills that already exist; compliment positive qualities. Weaknesses—unless they are character flaws—can wait.
- Enlarge them one step at a time. Help them take growth steps that enlarge them without overwhelming or discouraging them.
- Expose them to enlarging experience. Conferences, meetings and seminars can add a burst of energy. But these can only inspire people to make important decisions that lead to growth.
- Teach them to be self-enlargers. Teach them to find resources, encourage them to act out of their comfort zone on their own and point them to additional people who can help them learn and grow.



# SUMMARY

*Becoming a Person of Influence*

## ➤ ACTION STEPS

Get more out of this SUCCESS Book Summary by applying what you've learned to your life. Here are a few questions and thoughts to get you started today!

1. Analyze your integrity by examining your actions without excuse to circumstances.
2. Determine that you will uphold integrity regardless of personal cost.
3. How well do you listen?
4. What do you need to do to become a better listener?
5. List two or three ways you want to grow this month. What do you need to do to begin that process?
6. Do you see yourself as a mentor? Is there someone in your life you could mentor?
7. Think about the strengths of the person you would like to enlarge, then detail those strengths to him or her.

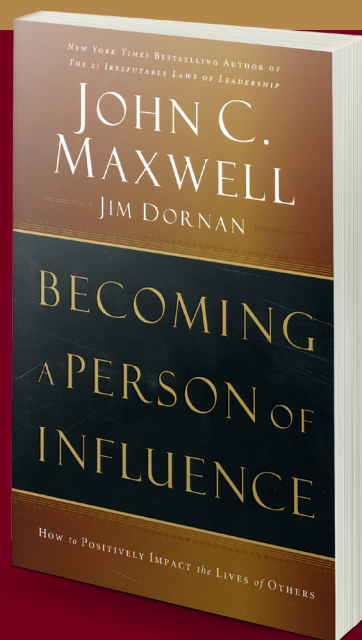
## Recommended Reading

If you enjoyed the summary of **Becoming a Person of Influence**, check out:

**Developing the Leader Within You** by John C. Maxwell

**As a Man Thinketh** by James Allen

**The Richest Man in Babylon** by George S. Clason



## About the Authors

**John C. Maxwell** is an author who speaks from experience, who “practices what he preaches.” As one of the most influential leadership experts of the 20th and 21st centuries, he frequently speaks to *Fortune* 500 companies as well as international government leaders. He has written more than 60 books.

**Jim Dornan** graduated from Purdue University, and trained as an aeronautical engineer. But he realized that he wanted to make a greater impact on the world. After succeeding as an entrepreneur, Dornan formed Network TwentyOne International. As a business leader and a mentor, Dornan speaks to groups worldwide.

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