

Groups

21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership by John Maxwell

Overview: This group is designed for a 10 week semester. Summer groups can combine 2 weeks at a time to fit into the 6 week semester.

Week 1: The Law of the Lid & The Law of Influence

Chapters 1–2

Summary:

John Maxwell begins by stating that leadership ability is the lid that determines a person's level of effectiveness—the higher the leadership ability, the greater the potential for success. This foundational concept, called the Law of the Lid, helps leaders understand that leadership is not just one aspect of success—it determines the ceiling. Organizations, teams, and ministries often struggle not because of vision, talent, or passion, but because of a leadership lid that hasn't been lifted.

The Law of Influence follows naturally, defining leadership as influence—nothing more, nothing less. Maxwell debunks the myth that leadership is tied solely to position or title. He explains that real influence is earned through trust, credibility, and service. People follow leaders they respect and who consistently show integrity and care.

Maxwell illustrates these laws with practical stories, including how McDonald's exploded under the leadership of Ray Kroc. Kroc wasn't the inventor of the hamburger or the restaurant, but his leadership elevated a local business to a global empire.

The first two laws invite self-reflection. Are we capping our teams or potential because we're not growing as leaders? Are we leading out of title, or are we earning influence through authenticity and results? Leadership growth starts with taking responsibility for where we are and committing to go higher.

This session sets the stage for a transformative journey by showing that leadership isn't a gift for the few—it's a skill that anyone can grow. Raising your lid and increasing your influence is a decision and a discipline.

Discussion Questions:

1. How have you experienced the Law of the Lid in your personal or professional life?
2. What are some areas where you may be unintentionally capping your effectiveness?
3. How would you define your current level of leadership influence?
4. What myths about leadership did this chapter help you let go of?
5. How does the idea of influence over position reshape your view of leadership?
6. Who is someone you respect as a leader and why?
7. What one step can you take this week to raise your leadership lid?

Week 2: The Law of Process, The Law of Navigation & The Law of Addition

Chapters 3–5

Summary:

In this session, Maxwell introduces the Law of Process, explaining that leadership develops daily, not in a day. Leadership is a lifelong journey that requires intention, practice, and patience. A strong foundation is laid through personal growth—reading, reflecting, and applying leadership principles over time. The key takeaway is that leadership is not a quick result; it's an investment.

Next, the Law of Navigation reminds leaders that anyone can steer the ship, but it takes a leader to chart the course. Great leaders anticipate obstacles and prepare for the journey ahead. Maxwell compares this to planning a successful expedition—you must see the destination clearly, consider potential problems, and guide others through with confidence.

The Law of Addition challenges a self-centered view of leadership. Maxwell boldly declares that leaders add value by serving others, not themselves. True leadership seeks to elevate and empower the people they lead. This principle transforms leadership from an ego-driven role into a people-focused mission.

Throughout these chapters, Maxwell shares real-world examples—like President Roosevelt’s proactive vision for America and Mother Teresa’s servant leadership—that make these abstract laws practical and inspiring. These stories show how leadership excellence is cultivated over time, through strategy, service, and perseverance.

By the end of Week 2, group members will recognize that leadership is an evolving commitment to grow, plan well, and serve deeply. It’s not about making yourself look good—it’s about making others better.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does the Law of Process reveal about your own leadership development?
2. In what ways can you commit to growing as a leader this year?
3. How do you currently “chart the course” in your area of influence?
4. What situations have challenged your ability to plan ahead effectively?
5. How does the Law of Addition challenge your current leadership habits?
6. Who is someone you can intentionally add value to this week?
7. Which of these three laws do you feel called to focus on most right now?

Week 3: The Law of Solid Ground, The Law of Respect & The Law of Intuition

Chapters 6–8

Summary:

The Law of Solid Ground teaches that trust is the foundation of leadership. Without trust, a leader cannot build influence or motivate followers. Maxwell shares that leaders earn trust by consistently living with integrity, being honest, and following through. Trust is hard to earn and easy to lose.

The Law of Respect reveals that people naturally follow leaders who are stronger than themselves. Strength doesn’t just mean skills—it’s about character, conviction, and clarity. Leaders gain respect through perseverance, courage, and commitment to their values.

In the Law of Intuition, Maxwell explains that great leaders often sense things before others do. Leadership intuition is developed through experience, awareness, and reflection. It helps leaders navigate change, read people and situations accurately, and respond quickly and effectively.

Together, these laws teach that leadership influence is built on the internal—trust, character, and insight—not just the external like charisma or credentials. Leaders must continuously earn trust, model strength, and grow in awareness.

This session encourages leaders to examine the depth of their foundation. The stronger your inner leadership, the more others will willingly follow.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does trust look like in your leadership relationships?
2. When have you lost trust in a leader, and what was the impact?
3. How do you earn and maintain respect with those you lead?
4. What internal qualities are most important to you in a leader?
5. Have you seen leadership intuition at work in your own life?
6. How can you sharpen your leadership intuition moving forward?
7. Which of these three laws challenges you the most right now?

Week 4: The Law of Magnetism & The Law of Connection

Chapters 9–10

Summary:

Maxwell opens this section with the Law of Magnetism, stating that who you are is who you attract. If you want better leaders on your team, you must grow into the type of leader who attracts them. Like attracts like—so improving yourself means improving your team.

He explains how personality, values, attitude, and energy levels shape the kind of people you bring around you. For example, positive people attract positivity, and committed leaders attract commitment. Leadership attraction is intentional.

Next, the Law of Connection teaches that leaders touch a heart before they ask for a hand. Connection isn't about charisma—it's about care. People won't follow you unless they feel understood and valued. Maxwell emphasizes empathy, listening, and personal investment.

He encourages leaders to adapt to others' communication styles and build bridges of understanding. Leaders who connect earn loyalty, increase engagement, and build trust.

This week challenges leaders to assess how they're growing personally and how they're building emotional bridges with others. Connection creates movement, and attraction begins with authenticity.

Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of people are you currently attracting as a leader?
2. How does your personal growth impact your team's culture?
3. In what ways do you intentionally connect with others before leading them?
4. How do you build empathy into your leadership style?
5. What keeps you from connecting deeply with those you lead?
6. How can you improve your ability to listen and relate?
7. What will you do this week to connect better with someone you lead?

Week 5: The Law of the Inner Circle & The Law of Empowerment

Chapters 11–12

Summary:

In this week's reading, Maxwell shares the Law of the Inner Circle: a leader's potential is determined by those closest to them. No one achieves greatness alone. Great leaders intentionally surround themselves with capable, trustworthy, and visionary people who complement their strengths and cover their weaknesses.

He explains that evaluating and cultivating your inner circle is vital to long-term success. The best leaders look for people with strong character, positive influence, and proven competence—and then pour into them. If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.

Next, the Law of Empowerment teaches that only secure leaders give power to others. Insecure leaders hold tightly to control, fearing they'll be overshadowed or replaced. Maxwell encourages leaders to let go of fear and pride and to lift others up, creating a multiplying effect of leadership.

He shares that empowering others fosters trust, raises morale, and expands capacity. When people feel trusted and empowered, they rise to the occasion. Real leaders don't create followers—they create more leaders.

This session highlights that leadership is not about doing everything yourself—it's about building strong relationships and delegating power to make others successful.

Discussion Questions:

1. Who makes up your current “inner circle,” and how are they influencing you?
2. What do you look for when selecting close team members?
3. How can you begin to build a stronger inner circle today?
4. Are there areas where fear or insecurity hold you back from empowering others?
5. What are some ways you can delegate more effectively this week?
6. Who is someone you can intentionally invest in and raise up as a leader?
7. How does empowering others align with your leadership values?

Week 6: The Law of Reproduction & The Law of Buy-In

Chapters 13–14

Summary:

Maxwell opens with the Law of Reproduction: it takes a leader to raise a leader. People naturally follow those who have led them well, and strong leadership is passed down through modeling, mentoring, and intentional development. This law reinforces the importance of living what you teach.

He explains that if you want more leaders in your organization, you must be one worth following. Leadership development doesn't happen by accident—it requires commitment and consistency. Your actions, character, and capacity all shape the next generation of leaders.

Next is the Law of Buy-In: people buy into the leader before they buy into the vision. If your team trusts you and believes in your leadership, they're more likely to embrace your vision—even if it's challenging. Without that trust, even the best vision will fall flat.

Maxwell encourages leaders to focus on relational equity, building credibility and emotional connection with their followers. When people are confident in their leader, they'll support the journey—even when they don't fully understand the destination.

These laws highlight the relational side of leadership. Effective leaders reproduce themselves by building people and gain buy-in through consistency, care, and credibility.

Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of leaders are you currently reproducing in your environment?
2. How can you intentionally invest in leadership development this month?
3. Have you ever followed someone because you believed in *them*, even before their vision?
4. What actions can you take to increase credibility with your team?
5. How does relational trust affect your ability to cast vision?
6. What's one area of leadership you want to model more effectively?
7. Who can you begin mentoring as a future leader?

Week 7: The Law of Victory & The Law of the Big Mo

Chapters 15–16

Summary:

This session begins with the Law of Victory: leaders find a way for the team to win. Victory isn't accidental—it's intentional, fueled by resolve, strategy, and unity. Maxwell teaches that great leaders see obstacles but press forward with hope and resilience.

He highlights that winners are willing to do whatever it takes—change course, innovate, or make tough calls. Victory-minded leaders don't settle or make excuses. They unite their teams around a common goal and inspire belief that success is possible.

Next is the Law of the Big Mo—momentum is a leader's best friend. Once momentum is moving in your favor, everything becomes easier. But creating it requires vision, passion, and early wins. Momentum magnifies performance and raises morale.

Maxwell notes that leaders are responsible for starting and sustaining momentum. This involves celebrating small victories, aligning the team, and keeping energy high. Once you have it, guard it; once you lose it, it's hard to rebuild.

Together, these laws remind leaders that winning cultures are built intentionally. With vision and momentum, leaders create a dynamic environment where success thrives.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does "victory" look like for your team or organization?

2. How do you respond when the odds seem stacked against you?
3. What tough decision are you avoiding that might be blocking victory?
4. Where do you currently see momentum in your leadership?
5. What steps could you take to build more momentum this month?
6. How can celebrating small wins shift your team's energy?
7. What's one area you need to reignite momentum in?

Week 8: The Law of Priorities & The Law of Sacrifice

Chapters 17–18

Summary:

Maxwell teaches the Law of Priorities with a simple but powerful principle: activity does not equal accomplishment. Effective leaders must understand what matters most and structure their time, energy, and attention accordingly. Just because you're busy doesn't mean you're being impactful.

He introduces the 80/20 rule and other decision-making filters to help leaders determine what only they can do, what can be delegated, and what should be eliminated. Prioritizing is not just strategic—it's spiritual, because it honors your calling and your team's purpose.

The Law of Sacrifice follows naturally. Leaders must give up to go up. Every level of leadership requires a trade-off. Maxwell emphasizes that true leaders are willing to let go of comfort, control, and personal gain for the greater mission.

Through examples of historical and business leaders, Maxwell shows how the most impactful leaders consistently chose the harder path in service of something greater than themselves. Sacrifice doesn't make leadership easy—but it does make it meaningful.

This session pushes leaders to clarify their true priorities and embrace the cost of making a lasting difference.

Discussion Questions:

1. What's one area where your activity may not equal accomplishment?
2. How can you better align your calendar with your core priorities?
3. What's something you need to say no to in this season?

4. What sacrifices have helped you grow most as a leader?
5. How does your willingness to sacrifice affect those you lead?
6. What trade-offs might be necessary to go to your next level?
7. Who inspires you by the way they prioritize and sacrifice?

Week 9: The Law of Timing & The Law of Explosive Growth

Chapters 19–20

Summary:

This week opens with the Law of Timing—knowing when to act is just as important as knowing what to do. Maxwell teaches that timing can make the difference between success and failure. A great idea at the wrong time can fall flat; a simple idea at the right moment can create huge momentum.

He outlines how leaders develop a sense of timing through experience, observation, and reflection. Timing includes reading people, situations, and the readiness of the team. Leaders who are “off” in their timing risk losing credibility and opportunity.

Next is the Law of Explosive Growth: to add growth, lead followers. To multiply, lead leaders. Maxwell stresses that exponential growth happens when you prioritize developing other leaders instead of simply directing followers.

He encourages leaders to look beyond managing day-to-day results and start thinking about leadership pipelines. Your organization’s long-term impact hinges on how many leaders you reproduce—not just how much work you get done.

These laws remind leaders to be both strategic and patient. Growth is intentional, and timing matters. But the real transformation comes when you equip others to lead too.

Discussion Questions:

1. When has timing helped—or hurt—your leadership outcomes?
2. How can you become more aware of timing in your current situation?
3. Who is someone you need to wait on, and who is someone ready for action?
4. What’s the difference between adding followers and multiplying leaders?
5. How are you currently investing in leadership development?
6. What’s one thing you can do this month to empower another leader?
7. What would explosive growth look like in your context?

Week 10: The Law of Legacy

Chapter 21

Summary:

Maxwell closes with the Law of Legacy— a leader's lasting value is measured by succession. Great leaders think beyond their tenure and work to leave something that outlasts them. Legacy is not just about accomplishments; it's about influence that endures.

He explains that legacy is built daily. The decisions you make, the values you instill, and the people you develop shape what you leave behind. Legacy is not automatic—it's intentional and takes years of consistent investment.

Maxwell shares stories of leaders who built enduring institutions because they prioritized people, purpose, and principle over personal recognition. Legacy leaders care more about who follows them than how they're remembered.

He also emphasizes the importance of transitioning well. Preparing the next generation of leaders is one of the greatest acts of service. A leader's final responsibility is to hand off the mission with clarity, humility, and hope.

This final session encourages leaders to live and lead with the end in mind. What you build matters—but who you build will define your legacy.

Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of legacy do you want to leave?
2. Who are you actively preparing to take your place one day?
3. How can you start building a legacy today, not someday?
4. What values do you want to be remembered for?
5. How does your current leadership reflect your long-term vision?
6. What systems or structures can you set up to outlast your leadership?
7. What's one step you can take to lead with legacy in mind this week?