



# The Maxwell 10-Day Reader

10 Days of Insights to Develop the  
Leader Within You and Influence  
Those Around You

**John C. Maxwell**

Adapted from *The Maxwell Daily Reader*  
with bonus content from *Goal Setting*

## BECOMING MORE DISCIPLINED

**H**ow are you doing when it comes to discipline? Do you take on mental and physical challenges just for the practice? Or are you constantly seeking a way to stay in your comfort zone? Do you sometimes regret that you've been unable to get yourself to do what you know to be right? Or most of the time do you believe that you do the best that you can? And how do you react under pressure? Do the people on your team expect extra effort or a sudden explosion from you when things go wrong? Your answers to those questions will give insight into whether you are winning the battle for discipline.

To become a more disciplined team player . . .

*Strengthen your work habits.* Discipline means doing the right things at the right time for the right reason. Review your priorities and follow-through to see if you're on track. And do something necessary but unpleasant every day to keep yourself disciplined.

*Take on a challenge.* To strengthen your mind and resolve, pick a task or project that will put you in over your head. Doing that will require you to think sharply and act with discipline. Keep doing that and you will find yourself capable of more than you imagined.

*Tame your tongue.* If you sometimes overreact emotionally, a first step to improvement is to stop yourself from saying things you shouldn't. The next time you want to lash out, hold your tongue for five minutes, and give yourself a chance to cool down and look at things more rationally. Use this strategy repeatedly and you will find yourself in better command of your emotions.

—*The 17 Essential Qualities of a Team Player*

WHAT KIND OF EXAMPLE ARE YOU SETTING FOR YOUR TEAM?

AUGUST 14

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## FOCUS ON THE BENEFITS OF COMPLETING A TASK

**I**t is extremely difficult to be successful if you are forever putting things off. Procrastination is the fertilizer that makes difficulties grow. When you take too long to make up your mind about an opportunity that presents itself, you will miss out on seizing it. To become effective and make progress in your area of talent or responsibility, you can't spend your valuable time on unimportant or unnecessary tasks. So I'm going to make an assumption that if you do procrastinate about a task, it is a necessary one. (If it's not, don't put it off; eliminate it.) To get yourself over the hump, focus on what you'll get out of it if you get it done. Will completing the task bring a financial benefit? Will it clear the way for something else you would *like* to do? Does it represent a milestone in your development or the completion of something bigger? At the very least, does it help to clear the decks for you emotionally? If you seek a positive reason, you are likely to find one.

Once you find that idea, start moving forward and act decisively. U.S. admiral William Halsey observed, "All problems become smaller if you don't dodge them, but confront them. Touch a thistle timidly, and it pricks you; grasp it boldly, and its spines crumble."

—*Talent Is Never Enough*

EITHER ELIMINATE OR ACT UPON THE  
THINGS YOU HAVE BEEN PUTTING OFF.

AUGUST 22

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## BREAK LARGE TASKS DOWN INTO SMALLER ONES

**M**any times large tasks overwhelm people, and that's a problem because overwhelmed people seldom initiate. Here's how I suggest you proceed in breaking an intimidating goal into more manageable parts:

*Divide it by categories.* Most large objectives are complex and can be broken into steps for functions. Begin by figuring out what skill sets will be required to accomplish the smaller tasks.

*Prioritize it by importance.* Don't be driven by urgency. When the urgent starts driving you instead of the important, you lose any kind of initiative edge, and instead of activating your talent, it robs you of the best opportunities to use it.

*Order it by sequence.* Dividing the task according to its categories helps you to understand *how* you will need to accomplish it. Prioritizing by importance helps you to understand *why* you need to do each part of it. Ordering by sequence helps you to know *when* each part needs to be done. Create a timetable, give yourself deadlines, and stick to them.

*Assign it by abilities.* Very specifically answer the *who* question. As a leader, I can tell you that the most important step in accomplishing something big is determining who will be on the team. Assign tasks to winners and give them authority and responsibility, and the job will get done.

*Accomplish it by teamwork.* Even if you break a task down, strategically plan, and recruit great people, you still need one more element to succeed. Everyone has to be able to work together. Teamwork is the glue that can bring it all together.

—*Talent Is Never Enough*

BREAK DOWN AN INTIMIDATING GOAL  
TODAY TO MAKE IT MANAGEABLE.

JULY 25

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## FIVE-STEP PROCESS OF TRAINING

The best type of training takes advantage of the way people learn. I have found the best training method to be a five-step process:

*Step 1: I model.* The process begins with my doing the tasks while the person being trained watches. When I do this, I try to give the person an opportunity to see me go through the whole process. When people see the task performed correctly and completely, it gives them something to try to duplicate.

*Step 2: I mentor.* I continue to perform the task, but this time the person I'm training comes alongside me and assists in the process. I also take time to explain not only the *how* but also the *why* of each step.

*Step 3: I monitor.* The trainee performs the task and I assist and correct. It's especially important during this phase to be positive and encouraging. Work with him until he develops consistency. Once he's gotten down the process, ask him to explain it to you.

*Step 4: I motivate.* I take myself out of the task at this point and let the trainee go. My task is to make sure he knows how to do it without help and to keep encouraging him. At this time the trainee may want to make improvements to the process. Encourage him to do it, and at the same time learn from him.

*Step 5: I multiply.* This is my favorite part of the whole process. Once the new leaders do the job well, it becomes their turn to teach others how to do it. As teachers know, the best way to learn something is to teach it.

—*Developing the Leaders Around You*

FOLLOW THE FIVE-STEP TRAINING  
PROCESS WITH SOMEONE TODAY.

AUGUST 3

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## FOCUS ON THE PRESENT

Just as you should keep your focus off yesterday, you shouldn't have it on tomorrow. If you're always thinking about tomorrow, then you'll never get anything done today. Your focus needs to remain in the one area where you have some control—today. What's ironic is that if you focus on today, you get a better tomorrow.

I try to do certain things every day to help me in this area. I read daily to grow in my personal life. I listen to others daily to broaden my perspective. I spend time thinking daily to apply what I am learning. And I try to write daily so that I can remember what I've learned. I also try to share those lessons with others. (Today's lessons become tomorrow's books.) Every day I read aloud to myself the daily dozen list from my book *Today Matters* to help me focus and have the right mind-set.

You should do something similar. You can't change yesterday. You can't count on tomorrow. But you can choose what you do today.

—*Talent Is Never Enough*

GIVE TODAY YOUR FOCUS AND  
REAP THE BENEFITS TOMORROW.

JULY 7

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## IMPROVING YOUR PREPAREDNESS

**A**re you used to winging it? Do you try to fake it 'til you make it? Or is solid preparation part of your regular routine? If you continually let your teammates down, you're probably playing in the wrong position or not spending enough time and energy preparing to meet challenges. To improve your preparedness . . .

*Become a process thinker.* Getting ready requires thinking ahead so that you recognize now what you will need later. Create a system or list for yourself that will help you mentally walk through any process ahead of time, breaking tasks down into steps. Then determine what preparation will be required to complete each step.

*Do more research.* People in just about every profession utilize some kind of research to improve themselves. Become more familiar with the research tools of your trade and make yourself an expert at using them.

*Learn from your mistakes.* The greatest preparation tool can often be a person's own experience. Think about the mistakes you recently made while completing a project or executing a challenge. Write them down, study them, and determine what you can do differently the next time you face a similar situation.

—*The 17 Essential Qualities of a Team Player*

FOCUS ON SOLID PREPARATION TODAY.

APRIL 16

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## A CHECKLIST FOR CHANGE

**B**elow are the questions you should review before attempting changes within an organization.

- | YES | NO  |   |
|-----|-----|---|
| ___ | ___ | Will this change benefit the followers?                                     |
| ___ | ___ | Is this change compatible with the purpose of the organization?             |
| ___ | ___ | Is this change specific and clear?  |
| ___ | ___ | Are the top 20 percent (the influencers) in favor of this change?           |
| ___ | ___ | Is it possible to test this change before making a total commitment to it?  |
| ___ | ___ | Are physical, financial, and human resources available to make this change? |
| ___ | ___ | Is this change reversible?  |
| ___ | ___ | Is this change the next obvious step?                                       |
| ___ | ___ | Does this change have both short- and long-range benefits?                  |
| ___ | ___ | Is the leadership capable of bringing about this change?                    |
| ___ | ___ | Is the timing right?  |

The last question is the ultimate consideration for implementing change. Success in bringing about change will happen only if the timing is right.

—*Developing the Leader Within You*

TAKE THE STEPS NECESSARY BEFORE TRYING  
TO IMPLEMENT CHANGE TO BE SUCCESSFUL



MARCH 27

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## GOALS GIVE YOU “GO”

**M**illionaire industrialist Andrew Carnegie said, “You cannot push anyone up the ladder unless he is willing to climb himself.” The same is true of a person on the success journey: She won’t go forward unless she is motivated to do so. Goals can help provide that motivation. Paul Myer commented, “No one ever accomplishes anything of consequence without a goal . . . Goal setting is the strongest human force for self-motivation.”

Think about it. What is one of the greatest motivators in the world? Success. When you take a large activity (such as your dream) and break it down into smaller, more manageable parts (goals), you set yourself up for success because you make what you want to accomplish obtainable. And each time you accomplish a small goal, you experience success. That’s motivating! Accomplish enough of the small goals, and you’ll be taking a major step toward achieving your purpose and developing your potential.

Goals not only help you develop initial motivation by making your dreams obtainable, but they also help you continue to be motivated—and that creates momentum. Once you get going on the success journey, it will be very hard to stop you. The process is similar to what happens with a train. Getting it started is the toughest part of its trip. While standing still, a train can be prevented from moving forward by one-inch blocks of wood under each of the locomotive’s drive wheels. However, once a train gets up to speed, not even a steel-reinforced concrete wall five feet thick can stop it.

—*Your Road Map for Success*

DEVELOP GOALS THAT WILL INITIATE  
MOTIVATION AND CREATE MOMENTUM.

JANUARY 16

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## MANAGE YOUR ATTITUDE DAILY

One of the most significant discoveries of my life was realizing that we often place too much emphasis on making decisions and too little on managing the decisions we've already made. This discovery was so significant to me that I wrote a book about it called *Today Matters*. The thesis of the book is that successful people make right decisions early and manage those decisions daily. You can make a decision to have a good attitude, but if you don't make plans to *manage* that decision every day, then you are likely to end up right back where you started. But here's the good news: *maintaining* the right attitude is easier than *gaining* the right attitude.

How do you do that? A Chinese proverb I came across gives insight: "Assume a cheerfulness you do not feel, and shortly you feel the cheerfulness you assumed." Or as editor and publisher Elbert Hubbard says, "Be pleasant until 10 a.m. and the rest of the day will take care of itself." When you get up in the morning, you need to remind yourself of the decision you've made to have a positive attitude. You need to manage your thinking and direct your actions so that they are consistent with your decision.

If you take responsibility for your attitude—recognizing that it can change how you live, managing it every day, and cultivating and developing positive thoughts and habits—then you can make your attitude your greatest asset. It can become the difference maker in your life, opening doors and helping you overcome great obstacles.

—*The Difference Maker*

MAKE THE DECISION TO HAVE A GOOD ATTITUDE TODAY,  
THEN MANAGE THAT DECISION THE REST OF THE DAY.

AUGUST 13

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## PRIORITIZE YOUR LIFE ACCORDING TO YOUR PASSION

People who have passion but lack priorities are like individuals who find themselves in a lonely log cabin deep in the woods on a cold snowy night and then light a bunch of small candles and place them all around the room. They don't create enough light to help them see, nor do they produce enough heat to keep them warm. At best, they merely make the room seem a bit more cheerful. On the other hand, people who possess priorities but no passion are like those who stack wood in the fireplace of that same cold cabin but never light the fire. But people who have passion with priorities are like those who stack the wood, light the fire, and enjoy the light and heat that it produces.

In the early 1970s, I realized that my talent would be maximized and my potential realized only if I matched my passion with my priorities. I was spending too much of my time doing tasks for which I possessed neither talent nor passion. I had to make a change—to align what I felt strongly about with what I was doing. It made a huge difference in my life. It didn't eliminate my troubles or remove my obstacles, but it empowered me to face them with greater energy and enthusiasm. For more than thirty years, I have worked to maintain that alignment of priorities and passion. And as I have, I've kept in mind this quote by journalist Tim Redmond, which I put in a prominent place for a year to keep me on track: "There are many things that will catch my eye, but there are only a few that catch my heart. It is those I consider to pursue."

*—Talent Is Never Enough*

MAKE SURE YOUR PASSION AND  
PRIORITIES ARE ALIGNED TODAY.

# GOAL ACHIEVEMENT WORKSHEET

Adapted from *Goal Setting: How to Create an Action Plan and Achieve Your Goals*

**The Goal.** Describe the goal.

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S-M-A-R-T Test: Make sure the goal fits each element of **SMART**.

Specific \_\_\_\_\_

Measurable \_\_\_\_\_

Agreed to \_\_\_\_\_

Realistic \_\_\_\_\_

Time-specific \_\_\_\_\_

**Reason.** Why do you want to achieve this particular goal?

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**Power.** What kind of power do you need to achieve your goal? What power do you currently lack?  
Develop a plan to improve your power to get it done.

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**Assumptions.** Things you believe about your situation, your plan, or your goal that you don't currently know for sure are true. (Example: My boss knows how hard I worked on the Glockenspiel deal. Are you sure? What makes you think so? Could the boss have noticed only some of your work?)

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**Constraints.** Things you can't do. Make sure you really "can't do" them. Is there another way to get the same desired result?

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**List Action Steps/Develop Work Breakdown Structure.** What do you have to do to accomplish the goal? If it's a complex goal involving several departments, a simple list of action steps may not be enough to capture what needs to be done. Use a WBS instead.

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**Develop Time Line and Budget.** Use a calendar or Gantt chart to schedule the action steps. Identify the resources you have available and decide how best to use them.

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**Prepare Risk Plan.** What are the key risks? How could you eliminate them in advance? How will you respond to them?

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**Verify Progress.** Are you accomplishing what you set out to accomplish? What milestones or signposts show your progress most clearly?

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**Celebrate Success.** Reward yourself and the people who helped you succeed. Even if it's an interim goal, celebrating your success today helps you move forward to another success tomorrow.

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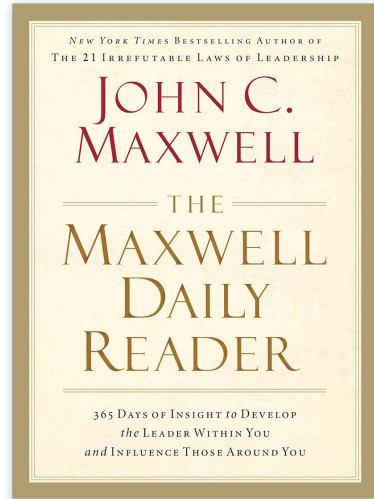
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