Discover the Choices That Will Take You Beyond Your Talent

TALENT IS NEVER ENOUGH

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MAIN IDEA
“If talent alone is enough, then why do you and I know highly talented people who are not highly successful?”
– John Maxwell

The fact is as long as there are people in the world, there will always be a large pool of raw talent available. If you genuinely aspire to stand out from the crowd, then there are thirteen choices you need to make in order to maximize your own personal talents:

1. Belief: Belief lifts your talent
2. Passion: Passion energizes your talent
3. Initiative: Initiative activates your talent
4. Focus: Focus directs your talent
5. Preparation: Preparation positions your talent
6. Practice: Practice enhances your talent
7. Perseverance: Perseverance sustains your talent
8. Courage: Courage tests your talent
9. Teachability: Teachability expands your talent
10. Character: Character deepens your talent
11. Relationships: Relationships influence your talent
12. Responsibility: Responsibility strengthens talent
13. Teamwork: Teamwork multiplies your talent

“Make these choices, and you can become a talent-plus person. If you have talent, you stand alone. If you have talent plus, you stand out.”
– John Maxwell

“There seems to be little correlation between a man’s effectiveness and his intelligence, his imagination or his knowledge. Intelligence, imagination and knowledge are essential resources, but only effectiveness converts them into results. By themselves, they only set limits to what can be contained.”
– Peter Drucker, management consultant

“Talent is cheaper than table salt. What separates the talented individual from the successful one is a lot of hard work.”
– Steven King, best-selling author

“Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice; it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.”
– William Jennings Bryan, attorney and political leader

“Life is a matter of choices, and every choice you make makes you. What will you do for a career? Who will you marry? How much education will you get? What will you do with today? But one of the most important choices you will make is ‘who will you become!’ Life is not merely a matter of holding and playing a good hand as you would hope to do in a card game. What you start with isn’t up to you. Talent is God-given. Life is playing the hand you have been dealt well. That is determined by your choices. Talent plus right
choices equals a talent-plus person. The talent-plus people are the ones who maximize their talent, reach their potential, and fulfill their destiny. I hope you will steer yourself in the right direction and make right choices that empower you to become a talent-plus person, build upon the foundation of your abilities, and live your life to its fullest potential.

– John Maxwell

About of Author

JOHN MAXWELL is internationally recognized as a leadership expert, speaker and author. To date, Dr. Maxwell has written thirty-eight books which have combined sales of more than 12 million copies. Two of his books, The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership and Developing the Leader Within You have sold more than a million copies each. Dr. Maxwell is the founder of Injoy Stewardship Services and EQUIP. Dr. Maxwell is a graduate of Circleville Bible College, Azusa Pacific University and Fuller Theological Seminary. He is also the recipient of five honorary doctorates of divinity.
Irrespective of what your natural inborn talents are, if you don’t believe in yourself, you’re not going to accomplish everything you are capable of. If you want to become the best person you can become, you need to do three things:

1. Believe that you have the potential to achieve great things – that you are capable of figuratively hitting the ball right over the bleachers. Many people fail to even try new things because they are afraid. If you believe in yourself and your potential to do great things, you lift yourself out of the masses and position yourself advantageously. Determine that you’ll achieve far more than the average person does and you’re on your way upwards and onwards.

2. Believe in yourself – that you can perform better in the future and that you’ll get better at things as you keep working at them. Self-belief of this nature is not showy but provides an inner calm so you perform when the pressure is on.

3. Believe that you have “a mission” in life – that there is something great out there just waiting for you to come along and deliver it. When you have a sense of destiny, you become empowered, encouraged and enlarged. With that kind of inner confidence, you’ll find you soon start pulling off feats which everyone else tells you are impossible.

If you want your talent to be lifted to its highest possible level, don’t focus just on your talents alone. Harness the power of your beliefs. Have an expectation that you can achieve great things and then get into action. Results always come from what you actually do but to perform well, you have to first have powerful underlying expectations and beliefs.

“Live the life you were meant to. Try to see yourself as you could be, and then do everything in your power to believe that you can become that person.”

– John Maxwell

“America has a tradition many nations probably envy: we frequently achieve the impossible. That’s part of our national character. That’s what got us from one coast to another. That’s what got us the largest economy in the world. That’s what got us to the moon. On the wall of my room when I was in rehab was a picture of the space shuttle signed by every astronaut now at NASA. On top of the picture says, ‘We found nothing is impossible’. That should be our motto. It’s something we as a nation must do together. So many of our dreams seem at first seem impossible, then they seem improbable, and then, when we summon the will, they soon become inevitable. If we can conquer outer
space, we should be able to conquer inner space, too. The frontier of the brain, the central nervous system, and all the afflictions of the body that destroy so many lives and rob so much potential.”

– Christopher Reeve, actor

“Life is a ten-speed bike. Most of us have gears we never use.”

– Charles Schulz, cartoonist

If you’re passionate about something, you’ll act with enthusiasm and energy. You’ll keep going until you achieve your objective. There really is no substitute for passion when it comes to making the most of your personal talents. Passion is vital because:

• It is always the first step to achievement.
• Passion increases and enhances your willpower.
• Passion produces energy to burn.
• Passion is always the foundation for excellence.
• When people are passionate, impossibilities vanish.
• Passion is highly contagious and addictive.

If you don’t possess the energy you require to make the most of your talents, fire up your passion. Here’s how you can do that:

1. Prioritize your life – according to your passions. Realign your work and your personal life so you spend more time doing what you’re passionate about and you can’t help but make giant strides forwards.

2. Protect your passion and nurture it – especially from those people who will tell you something can’t be done. The easiest way to do this is to associate with people who are passionate about what they’re doing as well. They will energize you to go out and reach the stars for yourself.

3. Once you find your passion, pursue it with everything you’ve got – because there’s nothing more frustrating than to miss out on opportunities to do great things because you were afraid. Dream big. Focus more on doing something extraordinary. It takes very little effort to survive so that really shouldn’t be an issue. Believe in your dreams and work to get there.
“It’s the greatest shot of adrenaline to be doing what you’ve wanted to do so badly. You almost feel like you could fly without the plane.”

– Charles Lindbergh, aviation pioneer

“Death isn’t the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside of us while we live.”

– Norman Cousins, writer and editor

“Your passion has the potential to provide you energy far beyond the limitations of your talent. In the end, you will be remembered for your passion. It is what will energize your talent. It is what will empower you to make your mark.”

– John Maxwell

“Safe living generally makes for regrets later on. We are all given talents and dreams. Sometimes the two don’t match. But more often than not, we compromise both before ever finding out. Later on, as successful as we might be, we find ourselves looking back longingly to that time when we might have chased our true dreams and our true talents for all they were worth. Don’t let yourself be pressured into thinking that your dreams and talents are not prudent. They were never meant to be prudent. They were meant to bring joy and fulfillment into your life.”

– Richard Edler, advertising agency president

If you genuinely want to reach your full potential, you have to show initiative and get into action. Initiative is vital because:

• It’s the first step in getting somewhere good.
• Initiative can offset your fears.
• Initiative always opens the doors to opportunity.
• Initiative eases potential difficulties and dissolves roadblocks.

In fact in a great many cases, initiative is the difference between success and failure. Talent without initiative can never reach its fullest possible expression. There are really only four kinds of people in the world:

1. The people who do the right thing without being told.
2. People who immediately do the right thing only when told to.
3. People who eventually do the right thing.
4. People who never do the right thing, no matter what.

Admittedly all of us fall prey to procrastination at different times and seasons but if you genuinely aspire to reach your full potential, you have to show personal initiative. To become better at this:

1. Accept responsibility for your life – because responsibility and initiative are inseparable. Everyone suffers setbacks but it’s what you do after a setback which determines whether you will be a long-term success or failure.

2. Understand your reasons for hesitating to take the initiative – and see whether there is a specific issue that should be resolved first. Get everything out in the open and then work through it.

3. Focus on the benefits of completing your task – and use that as motivation to take the first step and then another.

4. Share your goals with friends – and get them to help you. No one ever achieves great success alone. Let others assist you to achieve your dreams.

5. Break large tasks down into manageable chunks – which you can then prioritize and get done. You may even be able to assign different tasks to different team members and get things done in that way.

6. Allocate specific deadlines to tasks you might otherwise procrastinate on – and treat them like appointments you’re committed to.

7. Keep in mind preparation includes actually getting around to doing – so don’t spend all your life preparing to be a success at some point in the future. Take the plunge. Get into action. Intentions are fine but success requires initiative and action.

“Ideas are worthless. Inventions have no power. Plans are nothing . . . unless they are followed with action. Do it now!”

– Michael Angier, founder of SuccessNet

“To move the world, we must first move ourselves.”

– Socrates

“The wise man does at once what the fool does finally.”

– Baltasar Gracian, Spanish priest and writer
In most cases, success is not a one-time event. Instead, it is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal. And any time you participate in a process, time is required. This is where focus comes in. If you’re not focused on achieving something, you’ll end up doing lots of little things that are nice but don’t really add up to the achievements you crave.

With this in mind, there are a few things you can and should do to make focus your friend:

1. Be intentional in what you do – or in other words make every action count for something. Determine where you want to go, how to get there and then stay on that path. Don’t aimlessly drift from one thing to another. Have purpose and direction.

2. Directly confront your excuses – and challenge them to prove their validity. Most people that achieve greatness do so regardless of all their reasons for not doing what they ought to do. Don’t let little things get you off track.

3. Don’t let yesterday hijack your attention – and stop you from getting things done today. Strive to achieve today rather than mulling over the disappointments of the past.

4. Focus on the present moment – and fill your hours with the things which move you forward. If you concentrate on being productive today, tomorrow will take care of itself.

5. Stay focused on the results you’re achieving – rather than being worried about the difficulties you face. This will keep you motivated rather than depressed.

6. Develop some priorities – and follow your highest priority item at the expense of everything else. You have to concentrate on what will generate the greatest results in order to achieve anything truly meaningful.

7. Focus on using your personal strengths – rather than worrying about your weaknesses. You’ll always achieve far more by taking full advantage of what you do best than you ever will trying to fix what’s wrong or where you feel weak.

8. Get into the habit of delaying your rewards until the job is done – because this will serve to enhance your focus. Have a pay-now-and-play-later approach to your life.

“Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction.”

– President John F. Kennedy
“Few men during their lifetime come anywhere near exhausting the resources dwelling within them. There are deep wells of strength that are never used.”
– Admiral Richard E. Byrd, polar explorer

“The world stands aside to let anyone pass who knows where he or she is going.”
– David Starr Jordan, scholar and educator

“What you focus on expands.”
– Mike Kendrick

It’s always so easy to recognize the value of preparation with hindsight that it’s puzzling why so few people ever get around to preparing thoroughly. Preparing well allows you to really tap into your talents and make the most of every opportunity which comes your way. Thorough preparation is a process rather than a one-time event. The more prepared you are, the better positioned you become to make the most of any opportunities which arise.

Preparing well contains three main steps:
1. Assess – analyze where you need to go and what it will realistically take to get there. If you know exactly what you should be doing in life, what it will cost you in terms of resources and effort, what obstacles you are likely to face and what your current personal limitations are, then you can do something about it.

2. Align – make certain you’ve mastered the basics involved. Learn all of the techniques and systems which will be required to achieve your objective.

3. Attitude – train your mind to believe in yourself and in your ability to deliver what’s needed. See yourself succeeding in your mind’s eye and then go to work doing the same in the physical world.

“Preparation is one of the most obvious choices you must make in order to maximize your talent. Sometimes the preparation process is long and slow. It may require formal education. It may necessitate your finding wise mentors. It may mean getting out of your comfort zone. Or it could mean simply fine-tuning a skill you’ve nearly mastered. But whatever it requires, remember that you must be ready when your time comes. People don’t get a second chance to seize a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”
– John Maxwell
“What is the use of climbing the ladder of success only to find that it’s leaning against the wrong building?”
- James Dobson, psychologist

“No plan is worth the paper it is printed on unless it starts you going.”
- William Danforth, former university chancellor

“The secret of success in life is for a man to be ready for his time when it comes.”
- Benjamin Disraeli, former prime minister of England

“Preparedness is the key to success and victory. The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war”.
- General Douglas MacArthur

“Before everything else, getting ready is the secret of success.”
- Henry Ford, automaker

“Men give me credit for genius; but all the genius I have lies in this: When I have a subject on hand, I study it profoundly.”
- Alexander Hamilton, a founding father of the United States

Nobody is born highly talented. To become good at anything, we all have to practice. Practice sharpens our natural talents and helps us develop new skills. As we practice, we end up discovering what our natural talents are in more detail. Regular practice instills a mental discipline which will be very worthwhile when we come to crunch situations.

To practice effectively, you need five elements:

1. A teacher or coach who is good at passing on insights.
2. A willingness on your part to put in your best effort.
3. A clear purpose or objective you’re working towards.
4. The potential to be great at what you’re trying to do.
5. The right resources, tools and equipment.

To become very good at practicing whatever you’re trying to master or become better at:
1. Commit to putting in a little extra effort every day – because you won’t get there in one foul swoop. You want to try your best and then put in another extra 10%. Your improvement will always lie in that last 10% you’re putting in more than everyone else.

2. Commit to investing a little extra time in more practice – because successful people always practice longer and harder than the average person. Never give up but keep persevering to develop the talents and skills you want.

3. Commit to seeking a little extra help – from people who have been where you want to go. In any professional pursuit, there will be people who have achieved things you respect. Seek them out and get their advice.

4. Commit to making a little extra change – meaning don’t just be open to change but pursue it wholeheartedly. You’ll be doing your best only when you’ve embraced all the positive changes you can. This means:
   • Changing enough to solve your problems, not get away.
   • Changing so you improve your circumstances.
   • Doing different things to get different results.
   • Finding helpful things to do.

“Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”
– Greek philosopher Aristotle

“Most people feel best about themselves when they have given their very best.”
– Bill Hybels, founder, Willow Creek

“No one ever attains very eminent success by simply doing what is required of him; it is the amount of excellence of what is over and above the required that determines greatness.”
– Charles Kendall Adams, historian

“Quality is a race with no finish.”
– William Johnson, owner, Ritz-Carlton Hotels

Perseverance sustains your talent

Perseverance is all about finishing what you start. It’s one thing to have talent but something altogether different to have staying power. No matter how talented you may be, unless you persevere, you won’t be able to achieve any great success. You have to follow things through.
Perseverance means you succeed because you are determined to rather than being destined to succeed. Great achievers never sit back and wait for success to come to them but take the initiative and get into action. Life is never one long race but a succession of short races, each with its own challenges and demands. The person with perseverance racks up a series of little daily victories which eventually generate noteworthy results.

To persevere means you don’t stop because you’re tired or discouraged. Instead, you draw sweetness and inner motivation out of adversity. You keep going, even when the omens don’t look all that favorable. Eventually, the compounding effect of doing the right things well comes to bear and you achieve the success you’re after. Perseverance is an investment in a better future.

Many elements of the modern lifestyle are enemies of perseverance:
• Many people give up at the first sign of resistance.
• Others believe life should be easy.
• Some people see success as a destination, not a journey.
• Relatively few people are resilient.
• Even fewer people have great motivating visions.

If you want to be able to sustain your talent and increase your perseverance:

1. Find a motivating purpose for what you want to achieve – and then pursue that vision with stubbornness and singular focus. If your purpose is powerful enough, you’ll keep going even when facing difficult circumstances.

2. Eliminate your excuses – and accept total responsibility for your own actions. Refuse to allow yourself permission to act at anything below the best of your abilities at any time.

3. Develop some stamina – so when the average performers around you are prepared to stop, you’re just starting to hit your straps. Be mentally and physically prepared to run a new race every day again and again until you succeed.

“Champions aren’t made in the gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them – a desire, a dream, a vision. They have to have last-minute stamina, they need to be a little faster, they have to have the skill, and the will. But the will must be stronger than the skill.”
— Muhammad Ali, heavyweight champion boxer

“Persistence is stubbornness with a purpose.”
— Rich De Voss, owner, Orlando Magic

“You can’t get much done in life if you only work on the days you feel good.”
— Jerry West, NBA player, coach and executive

“Every successful person finds that great success lies just beyond the point when they’re convinced their idea is not going to work.”
— Napoleon Hill, author
Unless you have courage, you’ll never move out of your personal comfort zone and discover what your true talents are. There are many times in life when change is needed but inactivity is far more comfortable. The person with courage boldly plunges in and faces the situation at hand, even when that requires displaying personal weaknesses. If you plan on achieving great things, your courage will be tested along the way.

If you desire to become more courageous:


2. Keep doing the right things – rather than whatever is expedient. To be courageous means to act in ways which are consistent with your core values all the time and not just when somebody else is watching. Be true to what you believe and your courage will increase.

3. Take regular small steps – rather than trying to make a great leap forward in a single bound. Personal growth is always slow so start with the small things and do them right each day. Change your lifestyle for the better and everything else will naturally fall into place.

4. Be aware that leadership won’t automatically give you courage – but being courageous will naturally make you a leader. Display courage and people will follow you because they want to, not because they have to.

5. Keep acting courageously – and over time your horizons will naturally expand.

“You don’t have to be great to become a person of courage. You just need to want to reach your potential and be willing to trade what seems good in the moment for what’s best for your potential. That’s something you can do regardless of your level of natural talent.”

– John Maxwell

“Courage is a special kind of knowledge; the knowledge of how to fear what ought to be feared, and how not to fear what ought not to be feared. From this knowledge comes an inner strength that subconsciously inspires to push on in the face of great difficulty. What can seem impossible is often possible, with courage.”
David Ben-Gurion, first prime minister of Israel

“Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway.”

– John Wayne, actor

“Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising which tempt you to believe your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end, requires some of the same courage a soldier needs.”

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

Many high achievers are noteworthy for their hunger to keep learning. They keep posing new questions, confronting new challenges and striving to find the answers to different questions, even when they already have a solid track record of impressive achievements. It’s all a matter of having the right kind of attitude more than anything else.

In practice, successful people put aside their pride that they already know it all. They approach learning as a lifelong pursuit rather than something they do in their youth. Talented people seek to become experts in the teaching process. They aggressively seek out teaching opportunities and then attempt to make the most of each and every one.

To pursue teachability:

1. Become a good listener – because you’ll always come across lots of good information if you’re listening rather than talking. If you’re an avid listener, you’ll be exposed to more ideas than you can ever use in your lifetime, which is good.

2. Understand the learning process – and realize that knowing is the enemy of learning. Remember the goal of what you learn is to act better rather than to know more. With that in mind, focus on:
   • Acting on what you know.
   • Looking for mistakes and evaluating what you’re doing.
   • Searching for ways to do things better.
   • Coming up with new and better ways to act in the future.
3. Look for and if possible plan some teaching moments – by reading books, visiting places that inspire you or spending time with people who will challenge you to grow. Expose yourself to lots of new ideas and integrate what you learn into what you do. Cultivate friendships with people who will challenge your thinking.

4. Make your teaching moments count – by writing down some to-do lists which will help you use what you learn, not just note it down and put it away for future use. Schedule some time to actually follow through on your new ideas.


“It’s what you learn after you know it all that counts.”
– John Wooden, Hall of Fame basketball coach

“Iron rusts from disuse; stagnant water loses its purity and in cold weather becomes frozen; even so does inaction sap the vigor of the mind.”
– Leonardo da Vinci

“A winner knows how much he still has to learn, even when he is considered an expert by others. A loser wants to be considered an expert by others, before he has learned enough to know how little he knows.”
– Sydney Harris, American journalist

A person with talent can make it into the limelight but to stay there, they need character. A strong character stops a person taking the shortcuts which can derail them. Character is the external expression of what’s already inside a person. Talent may be a gift but true character protects that gift.

A person with talent can make it into the limelight but to stay there, they need character. A strong character stops a person taking the shortcuts which can derail them. Character is the external expression of what’s already inside a person. Talent may be a gift but true character protects that gift.

In many ways, people are like icebergs – only 15-percent is visible and the remaining 85-percent lies beneath the surface. Character resides in that portion which lies below the surface, and really boils down to four distinct elements:
1. The self-discipline to do what you know is right.
2. Your core values or principles you live by.
3. Your sense of personal identity.
4. Your level of integrity or alignment of actions with values.
Character creates the foundation on which your talents and your life are then built. Character reflects the decisions you have made and communicates longevity. Character is a choice – if you want more, you can and must develop it. To enhance and deepen your own character:

1. Don’t give in to adversity – but weather life’s storms to the best of your ability. Hang in there even when the going gets tough. The strongest characters are forged in the strongest storms rather than in tranquility.

2. Always do the right thing – in every circumstance and in everything you attempt to do. If you can do what’s right rather than what’s expedient, you’ll build character.

3. Take control of your life – and be responsible for the decisions you make rather than believing things are forced upon you. Weak people blame their circumstances whereas strong people accept responsibility and then move forward.

“While your circumstances are beyond your control, your character is not. Developing character is your personal responsibility. It cannot be given to you; you must earn it. Commit yourself to its development because it will protect your talent.”

− John Maxwell

“It’s not the mountains we conquer, but ourselves.”
− Sir Edmund Hillary, first man to climb Mt. Everest

“There is no pillow as soft as a clear conscience.”
− John Wooden, Half of Fame basketball coach

“Character is the sum total of our everyday choices. Our character today is the result of our choices yesterday. Our characters tomorrow will be the result of our choices today. To change your character, change your choices. Day by day, what you think, what you choose, and what you do is what you become.”

− Margaret Jensen, author and speaker

“What we do on some great occasion will probably depend on what we already are; and what we are will be the result of years of self-discipline.”
− Henry Parry Liddon, English theologian and orator

“Men are alike in their promises. It’s only in their deeds they differ. The difference in their deeds is simple: People of character do what is right regardless of the situation.”
− Moliere
The relationships you form with others can either make or break you. They can either energize and empower you or drain you of the energy which could drive you forward. If you plan on achieving lots, you need to ensure your personal relationships are adding value to your life and bringing out the best in you.

Relationships typically go through four stages:
1. Surface relationships where you simply know each other.
2. Structured relationships based around recurring encounters.
3. Secure relationships where you trust each other.
4. Solid relationships where you try and lift each other.

You ideally want to build more secure and solid relationships as a way to enhance your talents. These types of relationships have some very definite characteristics:

• There is a level of mutual enjoyment.
• You respect and trust each other.
• You have numerous shared experiences.
• There is a high level of reciprocity.

To build more of these secure or solid relationships:

1. Identify the most important people in your life — those you will spend the most time with or whose opinions you value.

2. Assess whether these people are influencing you to move in the right direction — or whether they are draining you of some of your nervous energy.

3. If you find your friends aren’t really building you up, then get into action — and make some new and better friends. Get so busy building better more positive relationships you don’t even notice you’re not spending any time with your old friends any more.

“A true friend knows your weaknesses but shows you your strengths; feels your fears but fortifies your faith; sees your anxieties but frees your spirit; recognizes your disabilities but emphasizes your possibilities.”

— William Allen Ward, author

“Life is too long to spend it with people who pull you in the wrong direction. And it’s too short not to invest in others. Your relationships will define you. And they will influence your talent — one way or another. Choose wisely.”
“There is a choice you have to make in everything you do, so keep in mind that in the end, the choice you make makes you.”
  – John Wooden, Hall of Fame basketball coach

“The glory of friendship is not in the outstretched hand, nor the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is in the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when he discovers that someone else believes in him and is willing to trust him.”
  – Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Every man is entitled to be valued by his best moments.”
  – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Generally speaking, society tends to overvalue talent and undervalue the importance of responsibility. This is unfortunate because having a strong sense of responsibility actually provides the foundation for true success. Responsibility, when handled properly, usually leads to still more responsibility in the future. As you act responsibly over time, your reputation is first forged and then strengthened. If you want people to trust you, embrace responsibility and practice it faithfully.

To become more responsible:

1. Start from where you are at present – and pledge that you will from this day on start acting more responsibly.

2. Choose your friends wisely – because it will be hard for you to act responsibly if you spend all your time associating with people who are irresponsible.

3. Stop blaming others – and instead look in the mirror for the source of all your problems. Don’t worry about apportioning blame but square your shoulders and get to work.

4. Learn the four core lessons of responsibility –
   ■ To gain meaningful success, you have to practice self-discipline first and foremost.
   ■ Whatever you start, finish.
   ■ When others are depending on you, don’t ever let them down, even for a minute.
Don’t expect others to step up and assume responsibility instead of you.

5. Make the tough decisions – and then stand by whatever you have decided come hell or high water. Be accountable for everything that happens on your watch.

6. Serve other people – because you’ll always grow when you give something back.

“Practicing responsibility will do great things for you. It will strengthen your talent, advance your skills, and increase your opportunities. It will improve your quality of life during the day and help you sleep better at night. But it will also improve the lives of the people around you. If you want your life to be a magnificent story, then realize that you are its author. Every day you have the chance to write a new page in that story. Fill those pages with responsibility to others and yourself. If you do, in the end you will not be disappointed.”

– John Maxwell

“You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.”

– President Abraham Lincoln

“My philosophy is that not only are you responsible for your life, but doing the best at this moment puts you in the best place for the next moment.”

– Oprah Winfrey, television host

Teams not only allow people to achieve more than they could working alone but they also have a compounding effect not unlike interest. A group of people working together to achieve the same objective can literally move mountains. The key benefits of teams are:

■ Teams divide the work that must get done into manageable chunks. When lots of different people do their bit, the combined effect can be impressive.

■ Teams minimize the impact of any single person’s weaknesses and maximize their potential.

■ Teams provide multiple perspectives on how to reach a target and this duplicity of alternatives increases the likelihood of success.
Exceptional individual talent may win a game or two for a team, but to win a championship, you need a solid team.

Teams allow individuals to focus on overall victory and not just personal performance. Great teams come about when all of the members make decisions based on what’s best for the team rather than their own narrow interests.

Belonging to a great team creates a sense of community, which in turn increases the level of trust.

As team members work to add value to what others are doing, they automatically add value to themselves as well. Overall, teams offer such compelling and obvious advantages it is little wonder most highly talented people choose to be part of a dynamic team rather than go alone. Teams have an amplification effect which cannot be realized any other way.

To build your own high-performance team:

1. Buy into the fact that to achieve something significant, you need a team — you can’t achieve greatness on your own. Unless you buy into this idea fully, you won’t be able to move your team to the next level of performance.

2. Integrate a team into your dreams — visualize yourself being successful as part of a great team rather than trying to do everything yourself. Whether you visualize yourself as the leader of the team or not doesn’t really matter as long as it doesn’t hold you back from engaging in teamwork. If you can find others who share your passions and attitudes, imagine how much fun it will be to come to work every day.

3. Start to develop your team — which means getting the right people involved and then working to develop their skills and competencies. Do everything you can to help the people on your team grow and develop their abilities. This is what all the great leaders throughout history have always done. Not only do these leaders concentrate on becoming better themselves but they also inspire the others they associate with to share in similar personal development.

4. If you achieve any measure of success, give the credit to your team — because that’s where the credit will truly belong. Genuinely great leaders recognize everyone is important and that people do their best work when their contribution is openly acknowledged. Follow their lead. Take more than your fair share of the blame when things go wrong and give all the credit away when things go well. Everyone will love you for it.

“A talented person who is part of a team — in the right place on the right team — becomes more than he ever could on his own.”

— John Maxwell

“The essence of leadership is the ability to inspire others to work together as a team — to stretch for a common objective.”

— Harold S. Geneen, president and CEO of ITT

“Teamwork requires that everyone’s efforts flow in a single direction. Feelings of
significance happen when a team's energy takes on a life of its own.”
- Pat Riley, NBA championship winning coach

“You are not here merely to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and to impoverish yourself if you forget the errand.”
- President Woodrow Wilson

“If you pick the right people and give them the opportunity to spread their wings – and put compensation as a carrier behind it – you almost don’t have to manage them.”
- Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric

“In reality, a leader must understand that success is best achieved through teamwork. From the moment you are put in a leadership position you must demonstrate ultimate humility. A leader must know his weaknesses in order to counterbalance them with the strengths of the team. When I became mayor of New York, I had both strengths and weaknesses. For instance, I did not have very much experience in economics. I found members for my team that had great experience and great talent in the field of economics. When every member of the team is operating in his or her strengths, your organization will flourish. When crisis comes you will have the people in place to manage every situation with excellence.”
- Rudy Giuliani, former mayor of New York City

“There are plenty of teams in every sport that have great players and never win titles. Most of the time, those players aren’t willing to sacrifice for the greater good of the team. The funny thing is, in the end, their unwillingness to sacrifice only makes individual goals more difficult to achieve. One thing I believe to the fullest is that if you think and achieve as a team, the individual accolades will take care of themselves. Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships.”
- Michael Jordan, basketball player

“Whatever talent you have, you can improve. Never forget that the choices you make in the end make you. Choose to become a talent-plus person. If you do, you will add value to yourself, add value to others, and accomplish more than you dreamed was possible.”
- John Maxwell

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