



## **Management Thought Leaders**

**January/February 2011**

### **An Interview with John C. Maxwell on Personal Branding**

John C. Maxwell is internationally recognized among the World's Top Leadership Gurus for his commitment to developing leaders of excellence and integrity. Through his Five Levels of Leadership—position, permission, production, people, development, and personhood, Maxwell proposes that leadership is a process of personal development that develops daily, not in a day. Accordingly, leadership learning never ends.

On June 4, 2010, Dan Schawbel interviewed author and speaker, John Maxwell, about his latest book, *Everyone Communicates Few Connect*. In the interview, John talks about how to connect with people, why managers fail to connect, and the five principles and practices of connecting.

#### **Q: Why does everyone communicate but few connect?**

JM: I believe that most people are more concerned about getting across their point of view, trying to be heard and understood. To connect you have to do something counter-intuitive: focus on the other person and try to understand their point of view.

#### **Q: What are some ways to connect with people?**

JM: First, listen. One on one, I'll ask questions and listen to the other person's answers to get to know them. When I prepare to speak to a group, I ask lots of questions to find out what my host and audience care about. I pay attention to what's happening in the room. Sometimes how I'm introduced will give me clues as to what would add the most value to the audience. Also, it's amazing what eye contact and a smile will do to help you connect, whether with an individual or a group. Eye contact helps me gauge their response, and a smile lets people know I care.

#### **Q: Of the 5 principles of connecting, which is most crucial?**

JM: Principle #2: connecting is all about others, is the most crucial of the five principles of connecting. Most important is recognizing this truth will make a huge difference in a communicator's ability to connect. The biggest single step you can take in growth as a connector is to change your focus. The five principles of connecting are:

1. Connecting increases your influence.
2. Connecting is all about others.
3. Connecting goes beyond words.
4. Connecting requires energy.
5. Connecting is more skill than natural talent.

**Q: Of the 5 practices of connecting, which has been most important in your career?**

JM: Connectors live what they communicate. I believe that the greatest disconnect is when a speaker's words and actions don't line up. You can be eloquent and persuasive and be sharing a great message. But if the audience senses that what you say and who you are don't match, you lose credibility and the audience disconnects. The five practices of connecting are:

1. Connectors connect on common ground.
2. Connectors do the difficult work of keeping it simple.
3. Connectors create an experience everyone enjoys.
4. Connectors inspire people.
5. Connectors live what they communicate.

**Q: How can someone in the workforce create change?**

JM: It probably won't surprise you that I believe the best way to initiate change is to CONNECT. Think about it; change within an organization begins with people. So your ability to communicate and connect with others is a major factor in increasing your influence. And increasing your influence with them is your way of making change happen.

Some tips for managers--Be prepared to expend energy on connecting. It's not something you can do only when you feel like it or when it's convenient. It requires you to focus on others. If you focus on yourself, your agenda isn't connection; it's manipulation. Finally, look for common ground. By finding where you're similar with others, you can begin to build a bridge.

-----

***John C. Maxwell** is an internationally recognized leadership expert, speaker, and author. He speaks to Fortune 500 companies, international government leaders, and audiences as diverse as the United States Military Academy at West Point, the National Football League, and ambassadors at the United Nations. Maxwell was named the World's Top Leadership Guru by Leadershipgurus.net. He was also one of only 25 authors and artists named to Amazon.com's 10th Anniversary Hall of Fame. His books include: *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, *Developing the Leader Within You*, and *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*.*