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# Your Road Map for Success

You Can Get There from Here

John C. Maxwell • Thomas Nelson © 2002 • 240 pages

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## Leadership

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### Take-Aways

- True success is a process, not a destination. Think about your definition of success.
- Identify the direction you want your life to take, and ensure your dreams and goals will take you there.
- Learn how to take responsibility for your attitudes rather than blaming others.
- Create a mission statement that defines your personal goals and image of success.
- Living a successful life means making growth a lifelong quest.
- Face your fears and use failure to propel you toward success.
- Watch for the landmarks: keep track of your internal progress.
- Create a strong family life – it will make your journey more fulfilling.
- Surround yourself with people you admire and regard as inspiring.
- Successful individuals can take others higher through mentoring and developing.

## Recommendation

A popular leadership speaker and prolific author, John C. Maxwell has a great deal of experience in the process of personal growth, and he communicates it well. This book, published as *The Success Journey* in 1977, is a useful step-by-step guide to plotting your journey to success, right down to the thoughtful exercises at the end of each chapter. Maxwell does a nice job of mixing the personal and professional sides of success and encouraging you to redefine it. His definition is that success is following your true purpose and living up to your dreams and potential, rather than just accumulating wealth and possessions. The book is quite a fast read – probably because a good portion of it is devoted to quoting others – and its evangelical tone may not appeal to all readers. Maxwell also makes frequent use of catchphrases, which help fill a page but say little. *getAbstract* recommends this book to ambitious individuals looking for guidance on creating and following a workable, actionable life plan.

## Summary

### Know Where You Are Going

Before you begin your journey toward success, you must have a definition of what it takes to be truly successful. Many people have the wrong definition. They think that success comes in the form of money or power, achievements or possessions; others think that success is the pursuit of happiness, though their quest for it makes them continually miserable. Success is not a destination; it is a process. Success comes from having a mission in life and knowing how to grow in order to fulfill it.

*“Success is knowing your purpose in life, growing to reach your maximum potential and sowing seeds that benefit others.”*

One of the first steps in embarking on your journey to success is to determine the direction in which you are going. You must have a dream to drive you, motivate you, add meaning to your life and ultimately determine your destiny. How do you develop a dream? First examine your thoughts and focus on the hopes you think about most often. You must be confident that you can fulfill your goals. Cast aside your fear of failing. Use your creativity and “constructive discontent” to your advantage in the development of your dreams. Your vision requires dedication and perseverance. Many people lose sight of their objectives and let their dreams slide away. Share your aspirations with others; allow them to inspire you and those around you.

### The Right Attitude

Once you know where you are headed on your trek to success, your attitude will govern how far you travel. The way you regard changing circumstances and events largely determines your progress in life. You can change your attitude consciously at any point: indeed, you have done it many times before. How do you know if you have a great attitude? Positive people have seven qualities:

1. “Belief in self.”
2. “Willingness to see the best in others.”
3. “Ability to see opportunity everywhere.”

4. "Focus on solutions."
5. "Desire to give."
6. "Persistence."
7. "Responsibility for their lives."

*"Money often brings options, but it doesn't necessarily add value to your life."*

Like most people, you may need to align your attitudes with your dreams. You can use some specific strategies. Recognize your own responsibility in each situation rather than blaming external forces. Once you accept ownership of your attitude, you can change it. Spend time with positive influences and live in the present. If you find that pressures in your life are undermining your attitude, do something to relieve your stress. Most importantly, do not take yourself too seriously. Remember, only you have the power to change your attitude.

*"The journey doesn't take care of itself. You have to plan it. If you just start driving, there is no telling where you'll end up."*

Now that you have the tools to create a great attitude, think about how you can use them to reach your dream. Part of the process of living successfully is to set goals. These objectives are the small steps you will take on your journey. Having goals will bring purpose to each day and keep you focused on your vision. They will help you realize that reaching your dream is not just about activity but about improvement. Appreciate your progress as you reach each goal.

*"Nothing in your past guarantees that you will continue growing toward your potential in the future."*

What is the right way to set meaningful goals? First, acknowledge your starting point and how far you will have to travel to reach your destination. Understand what you will have to achieve and what it will cost. Define your true picture of success in the form of a mission statement. Make your goals explicit by writing them down and include a deadline to give them tangible reality. Make your objectives detailed enough so that you will know when you have achieved them. However, this does not mean they cannot change; in fact, they should change as you do. Review and update them periodically.

## **Achieving Your Full Potential**

You must value your personal and professional growth if you want to live your life to the fullest. For many, growth is daunting because it involves change, which can be uncomfortable. But you can go much further toward success than you ever dreamed. How do you choose to live a life of growth? First, seize that decision and then open yourself up to the possibilities around you. Follow these four principles to realize your potential:

1. "Concentrate on one main goal."
2. "Concentrate on continual improvement."
3. "Forget the past."
4. "Focus on the future."

*“When our attitudes outdistance our abilities, even the impossible becomes possible.”*

Emphasize your personal development rather than a search for fulfillment. Acknowledge your accomplishments, but use them as stepping stones to further growth. Choose a few specific themes and make a plan for each day. Remember that growth is not always easy, but it is worth the sacrifice. Create an environment where growth is possible, not only by nurturing connections within your circle of friends, family and colleagues, but also by developing new relationships.

*“Always dream and shoot higher than you know you can do. Don’t bother just to be better than your contemporaries or predecessors. Try to be better than yourself.”*

You will face two roadblocks along the road to success – namely, fear and failure. To overcome these barriers, turn each one to your advantage. How do you do that? Remember that fear is part of the process; everyone experiences it, but understanding the roots of your fear is important. Most fears turn out to be imaginary; they are based not on facts, but on feelings. Once you know where your fear comes from, you can acknowledge it and accept it as part of your journey.

*“Most people don’t realize that successful and unsuccessful people do not differ substantially in their abilities. They vary in their desires to reach their potential.”*

“When all else fails, laugh.” It’s more important to laugh when things are going badly than when everything is great. Keep a sense of perspective and a sense of humor. Failure can be a powerful tool in stimulating growth. You can learn from it and use it as an opportunity to catapult to a new level in your growth process. But try not to lay the blame elsewhere if something fails. The natural tendency is to blame others, but you will never overcome your failures if you do that.

*“You need to remember that what happens in you is more important than what happens to you.”*

How do you use failure to move forward? That depends on your attitude. Keep your head up. Acknowledge the value of failure and do not let it sap your self-confidence. Grow from it and view it as a mile-marker on your journey.

## Internal Progress

To stay motivated and to appreciate how far you have come both externally and internally, keep track of your progress along the way. Goals give you specific and measurable external accomplishments. Landmarks, on the other hand, denote your internal progress toward a successful life. They are reflected in your emotions and attitude. What are the landmarks that you will pass along the way?

- “Achievement over affirmation” – When you accomplish something important to you, you will appreciate yourself and your achievement. This matters more than the affirmation you may receive from others. Part of being a success is conducting your life unencumbered by the opinions of those around you.

- “Excellence over acceptability” – When you have found your true mission in life, nothing less than the best is acceptable. You will attend to the smallest details, always have your eyes open for ways to improve, stay focused and maintain the highest standards.
- “Personal growth over immediate pleasure” – You will be more dedicated to long-term progress than to the transitory temptations of the present.
- “Future potential over financial gain” – You will be able to recognize opportunities based on their possibilities for personal growth and long-term benefits, not just short-term financial gain.
- “Narrow focus over scattered interests” – You will hone your awareness so expertly that you will know instantly which opportunities will bring you closer to your destiny.
- “Significance over security” – You will be able to live according to your values, such as making a difference in the world, rather than an interest simply in personal safety.

*“Keep moving forward on the journey, making the best of the detours and interruptions, turning adversity into advantage.”*

Now that you know what the landmarks are, how do you continue your personal growth toward the next mile-marker? Concentrate on developing your integrity, remember that your journey and your success will not come without sacrifice, and do what it takes to remain focused on your objectives.

## Strong Relationships

Meaningful, long-term relationships will give your life purpose; they are a measure of true success. Being surrounded by a happy family can bring you great joy. But to have a solid family, you must understand the different personalities of each member and appreciate each person’s uniqueness. Spend plenty of time with them, and do not put your career or even your personal happiness first.

*“Several years ago I realized that all the success in the world means nothing if you aren’t loved and respected the most by those closest to you.”*

Learn how to deal with a crisis positively and creatively. An environment of open, continual communication will help prevent crises and build a strong foundation within your family. To create a strong unit, you must have values in common with your spouse and instill those values in your children. Remember that having solid personal relationships and a strong family behind you will help, not hinder, your personal success.

*“A person who has a dream knows what he is willing to give up in order to go up.”*

Surround yourself with people who inspire you. The individuals in your life will determine how successful you become, so take special care to find the right people to bring with you on your journey. How can you recognize real leaders, people worthy of emulation? Leaders will:

- “Make things happen.”
- “See and seize opportunities.”
- “Influence others.”
- “Add value.”
- “Attract other leaders.”

- “Equip others.”
- “Provide inspiring ideas.”
- “Possess uncommonly positive attitudes.”
- “Live up to their commitments.”
- “Have loyalty.”

*“The answer to the question ‘when do I start?’ is NOW.”*

True success is about much more than getting or achieving – it is also about giving. Consider all those who have supported you and helped you along the way. In turn, you have a responsibility to help others. Many people choose not to turn their attention toward bringing others along the path to success because they do not think they have anything to offer or, perhaps, they think they are too important and too busy to help others. This can rob you of a truly rewarding, meaningful experience. You do not need any qualifications other than a desire to help others.

*“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”*

As a mentor, you can make others feel important by offering your attention and encouragement. Remember that people are internally motivated; simply by taking an interest in them, you can help them harness that motivation. You will be a more powerful leader if you can connect with the people around you on a personal level. Make their development a daily priority in your life. Focus your attention on those who need it most.

Create good relationships with your colleagues at work before trying to tell them what to do and be willing to help them unconditionally. Bring people along until they are strong enough to go it alone. When they are able to succeed on their own, remind them of their responsibility to help others in turn. Investment in others means an investment in your own success that you will never regret.

## About the Author

**John C. Maxwell** is a leadership speaker and the author of more than 20 books. He is a corporate trainer and frequent lecturer.



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