



Everyone Communicates, Few Connect

What the Most Effective People Do Differently

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Only one thing stands between you and success. It isn't experience or talent.

In *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect*, world-renowned leadership expert John C. Maxwell says if you want to succeed, you must learn how to *connect* with people. And while it may seem like some folks are just born with it, the fact is *anyone* can learn how to make every communication an opportunity for a powerful connection.

How can you *really* connect with others?

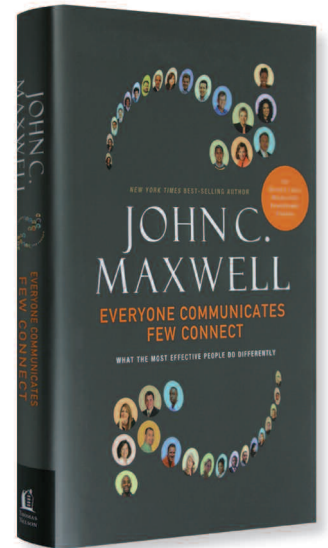
“Connecting is the ability to identify with people and relate to them in a way that increases your influence with them,” says Maxwell. “And the ability to communicate and connect with others is a major determining factor in reaching your potential. To be successful, you must work with others. To do that at your absolute best, you must learn to connect.”

It's a skill anyone can learn. In *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect*, Maxwell offers his proven method — Five Principles and Five Practices — so you can connect one-on-one, in a group or with an audience. You'll see all your relationships take a quantum leap.

Connecting is a skill you can learn and apply in your personal, professional and family relationships — and you can start now.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to find common ground.
- How to keep your communication simple.
- How to capture people's interest.
- How to inspire people.
- How to stay authentic in all your relationships.



by John C. Maxwell

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: EVERYONE COMMUNICATES, FEW CONNECT

by John C. Maxwell

The author: John C. Maxwell is an internationally respected leadership expert, speaker and author who has sold more than 18 million books including more than one million copies of *Developing the Leader Within You*, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* and *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*. He is the founder of EQUIP, a nonprofit organization that has trained more than 5 million leaders in 126 countries. His blog can be read at JohnMaxwellonLeadership.com.

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Prologue

When your phone drops a call, you know it, don't you? And what is your reaction? How does it make you feel? Annoyed? Frustrated? Angry?

Being disconnected wastes your time. It interrupts the flow of what you're trying to accomplish, and it undermines your productivity. The bottom line is that connecting is everything when it comes to communication.

You know when you don't have a good connection on the phone, but how about when you're communicating with people in person? Do you know when a connection has been made? Can you tell when the connection is starting to go bad? Can you identify when the "call" has been dropped?

Most people have an easy time knowing when the connection is good on the phone. But they have no idea if they're connecting with others in other everyday situations.

How do you know that you've connected with others? Look for the signs. When interacting with people, whether one on one, in a group or with an audience, you know you've connected when you sense:

- **Extra Effort:** People go the extra mile.
- **Unsolicited Appreciation:** They say positive things.
- **Unguarded Openness:** They demonstrate trust.
- **Increased Communication:** They express themselves more readily.
- **Enjoyable Experiences:** They feel good about what they're doing.
- **Emotional Bondedness:** They display a connec-

tion on an emotional level.

- **Positive Energy:** Their emotional "batteries" are charged by being together.
- **Growing Synergy:** Their effectiveness is greater than the sum of the contributions.
- **Unconditional Love:** They are accepting without reservation.

Anytime you interact with people and you see evidence of these signals, you know you're connecting.

If you want to learn how to connect and thereby become more effective in everything you do, there's good news. Even if connecting with others isn't something you're good at today, you can learn how to do it and become better tomorrow. ●

PART I: CONNECTING PRINCIPLES

Connecting Increases Your Influence in Every Situation

People cannot succeed in life without communicating effectively. It's not enough just to work hard. It's not enough to do a great job. To be successful, you need to learn how to really communicate with others.

Good communication and leadership are all about connecting. If you can connect with others at every level — one-on-one, in groups and with an audience — your relationships are stronger, your sense of community improves, your ability to create teamwork increases, your influence increases and your productivity skyrockets.

Connecting is the ability to identify with people and relate to them in a way that increases your influence



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with them. Why is that important? Because the ability to communicate and connect with others is a major determining factor in reaching your potential. To be successful, you must work with others. And to do that at your absolute best, you must learn to connect.

According to the *Harvard Business Review*, “The No.1 criteria for advancement and promotion for professionals is an ability to communicate effectively.” That means connecting! If you learned to connect better, it would change your life.

Connecting is crucial whether you’re trying to lead a child or a nation. President Gerald Ford once remarked, “If I went back to college again, I’d concentrate on two areas: learning to write and to speak before an audience. Nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively.” Talent isn’t enough. Experience isn’t enough. To lead others, you must be able to communicate well, and connecting is key.

It Starts With Your Attitude

The ability to connect with others begins with understanding the value of people. Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great*, observes, “Those who build great companies understand that the ultimate throttle on growth for any great company is not markets, or technology, or competition, or products. It is the one thing above all others — the ability to get and keep enough of the right people.” You do that by connecting with these people.

You can become more effective by learning to connect with every kind of person in any situation by:

- Focusing on others
- Expanding your connecting vocabulary beyond just words
- Marshalling your energy for connecting
- Gaining insight in how great connectors connect.

Here are five practical skills of connection to acquire:

- Finding common ground
- Making your communication simple
- Capturing people’s interest
- Inspiring them
- Being authentic.

These are things anyone can learn to do. ●

Connecting Is All About Others

When you are trying to connect with people, it’s not about you — it’s about them. If you want to connect with others, you have to get over yourself. You have to change the focus from inward to outward, off of yourself

Connecting One-on-One

To increase your influence one-on-one:

- Talk more about the person and less about you. Prepare two or three questions you can ask someone before a meeting or social gathering.
- Bring something of value, such as a helpful quote, story, book or CD, to give to someone when you get together.
- At the close of a conversation, ask if there is anything you can do to help them and then follow through. Acts of servanthood have a resounding impact that lives longer than words.

and onto others. And the great thing is that you can do it. Anyone can. All it takes is the will to change your focus, the determination to follow through and the acquisition of a handful of skills!

Three Questions People Are Asking About You

Understanding that your focus must be on others is often the greatest hurdle people face in connecting with others. It’s a matter of having the right attitude. But that alone is not enough. You must be able to communicate that attitude of selflessness. How do you do that? You do it by answering three questions that people always ask themselves when interacting with others, whether as a client, customer, guest, audience member, friend, colleague or employee:

1. “Do you care for me?” Mutual concern creates connection between people. Whenever you can help other people understand that you genuinely care about them, you open the door to connection, communication and interaction. You begin to create a relationship. And from that moment on, you have the potential to create something beneficial for both you and them, because good relationships usually lead to good things: ideas, growth, partnerships and more.

2. “Can you help me?” In his book *Presenting to Win*, Jerry Weissman points out that when people communicate, they focus too much on the features of their product or service instead of answering the question, “Can you help me?” The key, says Weissman, is to focus on benefits, not features.

In our current world, people are bombarded with information daily about the features of this product or that gadget. They tend to tune it out. If you want to get someone’s attention, show that you can help.

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3. **“Can I trust you?”** Trust is vital to any business. In fact, it’s vital to life itself. Author and speaker Jeffrey Gitomer once said that trust is even more important than love!

If I Were You ...

Whenever people take action, they do so for their reasons, not yours. That’s why we have to get on their agenda and try to see things from their point of view. If we don’t, we’re just wasting their time and ours.

You can connect with others if you’re willing to get off your own agenda, to think about others and to try to understand who they are and what they want. If you really want to help people, connecting becomes more natural and less mechanical. It goes from being something that you merely do to becoming part of who you really are. If you’re willing to learn how to connect, you will be amazed at the doors that will open to you and the people you will be able to work with. All you have to do is keep reminding yourself that connecting is all about others. ●

Connecting Goes Beyond Words

When people try to communicate with others, many believe the message is all that matters. But the reality is that communication goes way beyond words.

In an important study, UCLA psychology professor emeritus Albert Mehrabian discovered that face-to-face communication can be broken down into three components: words, tone of voice and body language. What may come as a surprise is that in some situations, such as when verbal and nonverbal messages aren’t consistent, what people see us do and the tone we use can *far* outweigh any words we say while trying to communicate. In situations where feelings and attitudes are being communicated:

- *What we say* accounts for only 7 percent of what is believed.
- *The way we say* it accounts for 38 percent.
- *What others see* accounts for 55 percent.

Amazingly, more than 90 percent of the impression we often convey has nothing to do with what we actually say.

The Four Components of Connection

If you want to succeed in connecting with others, you need to be sure your communication goes beyond words. How can you do that? By connecting on four levels: visually, intellectually, emotionally and verbally.

1. What People See — Connecting Visually.

People expect any kind of communication to be a visual

experience. Anytime you are in front of other people to communicate — whether it’s on a stage, in a boardroom, on a ball field or across a coffee table — the visual impression you make will either help or hinder you. The first place to start when connecting visually is to increase the chances that people are paying attention to the right things and not being distracted. If you’re well groomed and wearing the right clothing for your situation, then that’s a good start.

2. What People Understand — Connecting Intellectually.

To effectively connect with people on an intellectual level, you must know two things: your subject and yourself. As jazz musician Charlie Parker once observed, “If you don’t live it, it won’t come out of your horn.” There’s no substitute for personal experience when we want to connect with people’s hearts.

3. What People Feel — Connecting Emotionally.

Whatever is inside you, whether positive or negative, will eventually come out when you are communicating to others. People may *hear* your words, but they *feel* your attitude. That will either enable you to connect with people and win them over, or it will alienate them and cause you to lose them. In fact, your attitude often overpowers the words you use when speaking to others. As Jules Rose of Sloans’ Supermarkets points out, “The exact words that you use are far less important than the energy, intensity and conviction with which you use them.”

4. What People Hear — Connecting Verbally.

Words are the currency of ideas and have the power to change the world. What we say and how we say things make quite an impact. People respond to the language we use.

People pick up more than they might think from the way others say things. Tone, inflection, timing, volume, pacing — everything you do with your voice communicates something and has the potential to help you connect to or disconnect from others when you speak. ●

Connecting Always Requires Energy

It doesn’t matter with whom or within what context you are trying to connect. It’s always the same: You need to bring energy to do it effectively. And to make the most of connecting opportunities, you must channel that energy strategically. There are specific things you can do to help foster connection.

Five Proactive Ways to Use Energy to Connect

Here are five observations about the energy required

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to connect and what action you should take to be strategic in using that energy:

1. Connecting Requires Initiative: Go First.

Initiating a conversation with someone often feels awkward. Offering help to someone means risking rejection. Giving to others can lead to misunderstanding. You won't feel ready or comfortable in those moments. You just have to learn to get past those feelings of awkwardness or insecurity. The people who connect with others are the ones who go ahead and do what the rest of us never quite got around to.

2. Connecting Requires Clarity: Prepare.

Connecting requires that we know what we're doing when we make contact. That means having clarity of thought, and clarity most often comes as a result of preparation in three main areas: know yourself (personal preparation), know your audience (people preparation) and know your stuff (professional preparation).

3. Connecting Requires Patience: Slow Down.

Henry David Thoreau wrote: "The man who goes alone can start the day. But he who travels with another must wait until the other is ready." Waiting can be very frustrating. It can try your patience. However, if you want to connect with people, you have to be willing to slow down and go at someone else's pace. Good connectors don't always run the fastest, but they are able to take others with them. They exhibit patience. They set aside their own agendas to include others.

4. Connecting Requires Selflessness: Give. When you listen to someone speak, ask yourself, "Is the person giving me everything — eyes, face, body, brain and personality? Or is this person simply passing through town and this opportunity to speak is just a stop along the way?" People who want to connect with others must give their all. And that takes energy!

5. Connecting Requires Stamina: Recharge. If you are responsible for leading people or communicating with others, it is especially vital for you to find ways to recharge. It's really very simple. All you have to do is know the things you like to do and make time for them. If you can carve out moments to do what energizes you, then you will always have reserves of energy you can draw upon when you want to connect with others. ●

Connecting Is More Skill Than Natural Talent

Philosopher-poet Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "All great speakers were bad speakers first."

If you want to have better relationships, or if you

want to become a better leader, make connecting your goal. To do that, become a student of communication if you aren't one already. Study effective and ineffective speakers, observing what works and what doesn't. Give thought to what causes people to listen to others, and begin working on cultivating those characteristics. And wherever you go, watch how good connectors interact with people one-on-one.

Connecting One-on-One

The skills you learn to connect at one level can be used to start connecting at the next level.

Most people believe that it's easier to connect with people one-on-one than with a group or an audience. That's usually true because they have more practice connecting with an individual than they do with a group. The way to overcome the fear of speaking to larger groups is to practice using the skills you acquire at one level on the next level. The process begins with using whatever gifts and talents you possess to begin connecting with people one-on-one.

To connect well one-on-one, you need to:

- Have interest in the person.
- Place value on that person.
- Put his or her interests ahead of your own.
- Express gratitude to and for that person.

Connecting in a Group

Once you have begun to connect well one-on-one, take stock of what skills you've developed and what assets you've utilized to succeed in that arena. Now consider how you can use these things to connect in a group. What easily transfers? What must be "translated" or altered in some way to be used with a group? Use those skills. In addition, take the four things mentioned above for connecting one-on-one and expand them to apply to a group:

- Show interest in each person in your group. Do this by asking each person questions.
- Place value on each person by pointing out his or her value to the others in the group.
- Make it your goal to add value to everyone in the group, and let them know that is your intention.
- Express your gratitude to each person in front of others.

Connecting With an Audience

As you become more adept at connecting with groups, once again take stock of what worked in connecting with them. Try to anticipate what could work

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well with larger audiences. Just remember: the larger the audience, the more energy you need to bring to your communication.

To start the connection process, do the following:

- Show interest in your audience. When possible, meet and greet audience members before you speak. While speaking, let people know that you understand that each person is unique and special.
- Place value on each person by letting them know you spent a lot of time preparing your talk because you value them, their purpose and their time.
- Put the people first by letting them know you are there to serve them by being willing to answer questions and making yourself available to interact with people after a speech.
- Express gratitude and thank them for their time. ●

PART II: CONNECTING PRACTICES

Connectors Connect on Common Ground

The practice above all others that opens the door to connection with others is to look for common ground. It's difficult to find common ground with others when the only person you're focused on is yourself!

While it is true that not everyone starts out with the same ability to connect, anyone can learn to connect better because *connecting is a choice*. If you want to increase your odds of connecting with others, then make the following choices every day in your life:

- **Availability** — “**I will choose to spend time with others.**” Common ground must be discovered, and that takes time. Availability also requires intentionality. Make it your goal to be available to others. Don't disconnect; stay engaged.
- **Listening** — “**I will listen my way to common ground.**” Anytime you are willing to listen to others and figure out how the thing you're offering fills their needs, you've found a way to reach common ground.
- **Questions** — “**I will be interested enough in others to ask questions.**” If you aren't especially outgoing or have a difficult time asking questions, you can use this trick that Duke Brekhus says he learned from Ron Puryear. Remember the word FORM, which stands for family, occupation, recreation and message. Brekhus comments, “When we ask questions centered around these topics it is amazing how much we can learn about a person and how

quickly we can get to know them.”

- **Thoughtfulness** — “**I will think of others and look for ways to thank them.**” If you are able to show considerate thoughtfulness, you will find common ground with others.
- **Openness** — “**I will let people into my life.**” Communication is all about the openness of finding commonality with others. Connection always requires both parties to engage and be open.
- **Likability** — “**I will care about people.**” People like people who like them.
- **Humility** — “**I will think of myself less so I can think of others more.**” If you want to impact people, don't talk about your successes; talk about your failures. Civil Rights activist Cornel West says, “Humility means two things. One, a capacity for self-criticism. ... The second feature is allowing others to shine, affirming others, empowering and enabling others. Those who lack humility are dogmatic and egotistical. That masks a deep sense of insecurity. They feel the success of others is at the expense of their own fame and glory.”
- **Adaptability** — “**I will move from my world to theirs.**” To move others, we must first be willing to move ourselves to where they are. We must adapt to others and try to see things from their point of view. ●

Connectors Do the Difficult Work of Keeping It Simple

As leaders and communicators, our job is to bring clarity to a subject, not complexity. It doesn't take nearly as much skill to identify a problem as it does to find a good solution. The measure of a great teacher isn't what he or she knows; it's what the students know. Making things simple is a skill, and it's a necessary one if you want to connect with people when you communicate. Or to put it the way Albert Einstein did, “If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it enough.”

Here are five guidelines for keeping things simple:

1. **Talk to people, not above them.** The direct and simple approach is usually best in all forms of communication. Greater complexity is never the answer in communication — if your desire is to connect.
2. **Get to the point.** Good communicators get to the point before their listeners start asking, “What's the point?” To do that, one must start out knowing what the point is. The time to start thinking about the reason for your communication is before you begin to speak.

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3. Say it over and over and over and over again. Good teachers know that the fundamental law of learning is repetition. Repetition is essential in communication if you want people to understand and buy into what you're saying. William H. Rastetter, who taught at MIT and Harvard before becoming CEO of IDEC Pharmaceuticals Corp., asserts: "The first time you say something, it's heard. The second time, it's recognized, and the third time, it's learned."

4. Say it clearly. In the end, people are persuaded not by what we say, but by what they understand. When you speak clearly and simply, more people can understand what you're trying to communicate. Being simple as a communicator isn't a weakness. It's a strength! Author and critic John Ruskin observed, "The greatest thing a human ever does in the world is to see something and tell others what he saw in a plain way."

5. Say less. Executive communication coach Anne Cooper Ready, in her book *Off the Cuff*, gives the following advice: "Begin, and end, on time. Or better yet, end a little early. Even if you are a paid speaker and want to impress the organizers so they know they've gotten their money's worth, stop yourself with a particularly good answer a few minutes before you have to. In today's overbooked society, nothing is more appreciated than the gift of a little found time." ●

Connectors Create an Experience Everyone Enjoys

Being interesting can be learned.

As you prepare to communicate, no matter whether it's to one, 100 or 1,000, try to do as many of these seven things as possible:

1. Take responsibility for your listeners. In general, there are no bad audiences, only bad speakers. If the audience is asleep, somebody needs to go onstage and wake up the speaker! Take responsibility for creating an experience that others will enjoy when you're with a small group of people.

2. Communicate in their world. To connect with others in their world, you can't just live in your own world. You have to link what you want to say to what others' needs are. Anything you can do to relate to your listeners and meet them on their terms is going to help you connect — as long as you maintain authenticity. You can't pretend to be someone you're not. You have to be yourself while speaking someone else's language.

3. Capture people's attention from the start. Here are some things you can do: Start with a comment

about the situation or setting. Introduce yourself. Relax. Begin with humor. Create a sense of anticipation. You need to find ways to connect with your listeners early, put them at ease and get them interested from the start. Find ways to make the experience enjoyable.

4. Activate your audience. Look for signs of involvement from the people you're communicating with. If there are signs of life, great! If there aren't, get to work trying to get audience members involved. Here's how: Ask questions. Get people moving. Ask people to interact. It's the speaker's responsibility to bring energy to the audience and to work to activate them.

5. Say it so it sticks. If you want people to remember what you say, you need to say the right thing at the right moment in the right way! Link what you say with what people need. Find a way to be original. Use humor. Use a shocking statement or statistic. Say things in an interesting way. Learn to pause. Give people a chance to consider what you just said.

6. Be visual. Most people learn visually. Anything that can help people visually helps them to connect. Encourage people to take notes. When you've written something down it is more likely to stay with you. Use words to try to stimulate the imagination of your listeners. Encourage them to paint vivid pictures in their minds.

7. Tell stories. Perhaps the most effective way to capture people's interest and make the experience enjoyable when you talk is to include stories. Whether you are communicating humor, hard facts or tragedy, storytelling improves the experience. ●

Connectors Inspire People

As effective communicators inspire people, there is a kind of formula, The Inspiration Equation, that comes into play. It works like this: *What They Know + What They See + What They Feel = Inspiration*.

When these three factors come into play and a communicator is able to bring them into alignment, it creates a synergy that inspires people. And from that place of inspiration, you can often lead people to take action. Here are the three pieces of the Inspiration Equation:

- **What People Need to Know.** In the context of connecting, people need to know you're on their side. Greek philosopher Aristotle understood this and commented on it in *The Rhetoric*. In the context of persuasion, he identified the most important element as *pathos*, the communicators' ability to

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connect with the feelings, desires, wishes, fears and passions of their listeners. It's a way of giving people reassurance, of letting them know they can trust you, of telling them that they should listen to you. How do you communicate that? It boils down to two things: People need to know that you understand them and are focused on them, and they need to know that you have high expectations of them.

- **What People Need to See.** Most people decide very quickly whether they will continue listening to you or simply “turn off” and stop paying attention. Often they make that decision based on what they see. Their perceptions begin at a surface level. Do you look pleasant? Do you smile? If there are no red flags for your listeners, then they are usually willing to give you enough time to prove yourself. They are looking for your conviction, your credibility and evidence of your character.
- **What People Need to Feel.** The most important factor in the Inspiration Equation is what people feel. If you leave that part out and you don't help people feel what they need to feel, they will never be inspired. Why? Because people will not always remember what you said or what you did, but they will always remember how you made them feel! If you want to inspire people, there are three things you need in order to help them feel: your passion for the subject and them, your confidence in yourself and them, and your gratitude for them. ●

Connectors Live What They Communicate

To be successful in the long run, you need to do more than connect. You need to keep connecting, and you can do that only when you live what you communicate. When you do, the results can be fantastic. The more time goes by, the better the relationship gets.

We can't expect to connect with others if we don't live what we communicate. That can hurt someone professionally, but obviously it's even more painful on a personal level. One of the ways you can keep yourself accountable to live right is to think about the impact of your actions on your family. That's why you should always try to keep in mind this definition of success: “Those who are the closest to me and know me the best, love and respect me the most.” When the people who know how you live day in, day out, see that your words and actions align, then they can trust you, have

Action

If you really want to help others, you need to take your communication to the next level — which is to call people to action. When do inspired people take action? When you do two things:

1. **Say the right words at the right time.** Good leaders understand the importance of timing.
2. **Give people an action plan.** Connectors inspire people to move from “know how” to “do now.”

confidence in you and connect with you. And that makes life a great and enjoyable journey every day.

Credibility Connects

The true power of connecting with others does not come from superficial interactions with others — smiling at a stranger, being friendly with a food server or wowing a one-time audience. It comes from connecting with people long-term. In ongoing relationships, we are able to make an impact of real value. When we live with consistent integrity with our spouse, children and grandchildren. When we treat our customers, clients and colleagues the way they wish to be treated. When our neighbors see our values and actions lining up. When we lead others with honesty and respect. These are the things that give us credibility, allow us to connect and afford us an opportunity to help others and add value to them. As training consultant Greg Schaffer remarked, “If you do not connect with others, influence is out of the question.”

American writer Henry Adams said, “A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.” The same can be said of a connector who has integrity. We can make a difference in our world, but to do so we must begin with ourselves — by making sure our words and our actions are consistent every day. We must live what we communicate. If we do that, there's no telling what we will be able to accomplish. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect*, you'll also like:

1. ***The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* by John C. Maxwell.** All great leaders possess these 21 qualities.
2. ***The 360 Degree Leader* by John C. Maxwell.** Learn to develop your influence from wherever you are in the organization.
3. ***Leadership Gold* by John C. Maxwell.** Maxwell shares a lifetime of leadership truths, which can guide anyone who currently leads or aspires to lead.