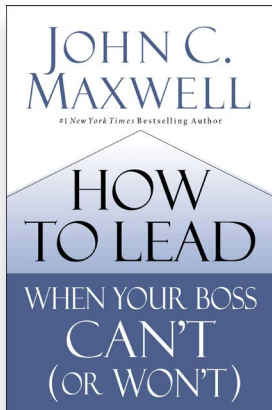


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Maxwell
John Maxwell speaks and writes on leadership issues.

How to Lead When Your Boss Can't (or Won't)

THE NUTSHELL

Harper Collins 2005

What Happens When Bosses Don't Lead

Everything rises and falls on leadership. When there is no good leader directing a team, running a department, leading an organization, or heading a family, then *Decisions Are Delayed, Agendas Are Multiplied, Conflicts Are Extended, Morale Becomes Low, Production Is Reduced, and Success Is Difficult.*

One of the worst things that happens when bosses don't lead is that the vision of the organization will dissipate, and the team will drift. One of the toughest things about working for a weak leader is that you often can't be sure of where you stand. This creates tension and confusion, resulting in *Lack of Empowerment, Undermined Initiative, An Environment That Doesn't Value Leadership, Lack of Clear Job Parameters, and Lack of Appreciation.*

If the leader you have to follow isn't a good leader, it doesn't mean you can't succeed, but it will be more difficult. The good news is you can make a positive impact through your leadership where you are, even if you report to someone who is one of the common bad-boss types.

How to Lead When Your Boss Can't (or Won't)

Lead Yourself Well Before Anything Else

If you want to be successful in your career, you cannot afford *not* to lead yourself well. If you want to gain credibility with your boss and others, focus on managing your *Emotions, Time, Priorities, Energy, Thinking, Words, and Personal Life*. Self-leadership also involves thinking the way a leader does and making good decisions, as well as developing and maintaining a great attitude.

Find Ways to Work with Your Boss

The majority of bad bosses have no idea how bad they really are as leaders. First of all, you need to come to terms with the fact that it's not your job to fix your boss, nor can you. Instead, what you need to do is find ways to work *with* your boss, not against him or her by developing a genuine relationship with your boss and finding ways to add value to his or her strengths. When you're working with a leader who can't or won't lead, what you're really trying to do is lead up—positively influence and support the person above you. If you help lift your leader's load, you help your boss succeed. (I recommend you lift up, not suck up.)

Develop Your Influence Wherever You Are

Sadly, too many people wait too long to start working on their influence in their organizations. You don't need any kind of title or position to get started. You can increase your influence no matter where you are in the organization.

Developing influence makes a difference because every time you add a good leader, you get a better team, and all the leaders in the organization get better. Good leadership throughout the organization gives it future.

People Follow People They Know—Someone who cares.

People Follow People They Trust—Someone with good character.

People Follow People They Respect—Someone with high competence.

People Follow People They Admire—Someone with commitment.

Leadership is a journey that starts where you are, not where you want to be. Greater responsibilities come only after handling smaller ones well, and leading at your current level creates your resume for going to the next level.

Avoid Landmines That Could Make Your Situation Worse

You may be able to improve your relationship with your boss and help your situation by doing the things I've suggested. There's no guarantee that things *will* get better, but I guarantee things *can* get worse. It's essential that you maintain a sense of positive contentment despite the challenges if you want to be successful. Develop strong relationships with key people and put the team above your person success. Stay away from office politics.

How to Lead When Your Boss Can't (or Won't)

Prove Your Worth Daily and Never Stop Growing

Few things speak more loudly than excellence. The first place you should strive to prove your value is in your craft. Becoming an expert at your craft takes time, but you can prove your worth right now by taking on jobs others won't—even those outside your craft or comfort zone. Do the things that will make the greatest impact and create influence with others.

All leaders are looking for people who can step up and make a difference when it matters. Team members who can make things happen are their go-to-players. Few things elevate a person above his peers the way becoming a solid producer does.

The final step you need to take in order to be successful working under a bad leader is to keep growing and improving as a leader. My life began changing when I stopped setting goals for where I wanted to be and started setting the course for who I wanted to become.