

MAXWELL MOMENT**Lessons from Basketball's Greatest Coach**

by Dr. John C. Maxwell

At 97 years of age, John Wooden is a legend in the coaching profession. In 1999, ESPN named him The Greatest Coach of the 20th Century.

The list of honors garnered by Coach Wooden during his coaching career is unrivaled.

- Over the course of twelve years, his UCLA Bruins basketball teams won ten NCAA Championships, including an astonishing seven in a row from 1967 to 1973. For comparison's sake, no other men's coach has won more than 4 NCAA titles.
- He led his teams to four undefeated seasons; no other coach has had more than one undefeated season.
- His teams set a record by winning 88 games in a row, including 38 in a row in the NCAA Tournament.

Winning: More than the score

After glancing at Coach Wooden's record, a person may be misled into thinking Coach Wooden was a man preoccupied with winning. However, nothing could be further from the truth. For Coach Wooden, competition was never about comparing his team to the opposing squad. Despite all of the victories, trophies, and championships, Coach Wooden **never** spoke to his team about winning.

John Wooden was college basketball's greatest coach because he kept score differently than any other coach. Rather than measuring success in terms of wins and losses, he focused relentlessly on potential and improvement. Coach Wooden would grow livid if his players loafed when the team was ahead by 20 points, and he could be thrilled with his team's performance - even when they lost by 20 points.

Leadership Application: When businesses focus exclusively on market share or the bottom line, they run the risk of overlooking or undervaluing the people, processes, and systems that drive results.

Practice: Not perfection, but preparation

When questioned by reporters about missing team practices, current NBA star Allen Iverson gave a disdainful tirade on the pettiness of practice. "We're sitting here, and I'm supposed to be the franchise player, and we're talking about **practice**. I mean, listen, we're sitting here talking about practice, not a game... how silly is that?"

For many sports fans, Iverson's comments were emblematic of the arrogance and me-first attitude of an athlete in the National Basketball Association. If nothing else, his words revealed his underlying attitude: I'm an NBA superstar; I've arrived; I'm good enough to skip practice; practice doesn't matter, it's my performance on game day that counts.

To John Wooden, such an attitude would have been reprehensible. Coach Wooden's style was best noted for his keen attention to detail and the rigors of his practice regimen. In his words, "If you prepare properly, you may be outscored but you will never lose. You always win when you make the full effort to do the best of which you're capable."

For Coach Wooden, winning happened when the stands were empty and the spectators absent. He loved the day-by-day discipline of practice. By convincing his team to give their best effort at practice, he coached them to perform at a higher level than opponents. As a result, he enjoyed unprecedented success when games were played and championships were on the line.

Leadership Application: Challenge your people to give top effort every day, and prepare to the point of excess. If you don't tolerate sloppiness when the team prepares, then they will perform better in pressure situations.

Peak Performers: More than Talent

John Wooden gained an advantage over other coaches because he had a superior method of selecting players. While most recruiters scoured high school gyms solely in search of talent and athleticism, Coach Wooden began his search from a different vantage point.

When selecting players, Coach Wooden's primary consideration was the student's transcript. For him, a student's discipline in the classroom spoke volumes about the young man's priorities. Coach Wooden wanted players who recognized their primary responsibility was to earn a college degree rather than excel on the court.

When evaluating potential recruits, John Wooden's second criterion was the student's family life. Did the student respect his parents or guardians? Did the student treat his siblings kindly? By looking into a potential player's family life, Coach Wooden measured the player's ability to build healthy relationships. He knew relational skills were essential for establishing teamwork and camaraderie.

John Wooden's third consideration when selecting talent was the composite evaluation of six coaches. He was leery of basing his analysis on a single performance. By diligently consulting the opinion of six coaches, Coach Wooden measured consistency. He wanted to avoid selecting players who gave top effort one night only to withhold it on another evening.

Coach Wooden's final criteria for selecting players were quickness and talent. He wasn't naïve. He knew speed and natural ability were uncoachable and irreplaceable. Even so, he refused to select a player until he felt comfortable with the young man's priorities, relationships, and track record of consistent performance.

Leadership Application: By looking blindly at talent, leaders end up with malcontents who place personal gain above team spirit or talent-rich sluggards who rarely give their best effort. When hiring, consider an interviewee's life priorities, relational history, and career accomplishments. Don't discount talent, but never elevate it as the sole quality in a prospective teammate.

[Return to top...](#)

LEADERSHIP@LARGE

Multitasking: Skill or Malady?

Stuck in Atlanta traffic, I've passed the time by calculating the percentage of my fellow motorists who are speaking on their cell phones behind the wheel. It's not uncommon for more than half of the drivers I count to be on the phone.

The University of Utah conducted research claiming that drivers speaking on mobile phones are as impaired as drunk drivers. While many of us have heard similar research findings, the evidence hasn't stopped us from multitasking on the roadways.

I'm as guilty as anyone. Occasionally, I try to read while stopped at a light, and I've developed the nasty habit of sending text messages while driving. I've also mixed together packets of mayonnaise and ketchup so that I could eat an entire large order of Chick-Fil-A waffle fries - all while driving *and* talking on my phone.

At a certain level, I realize multitasking may be counterproductive or even dangerous. However, part of me never fails to feel like I'm winning back precious time by simultaneously cramming several activities together.

More is Less

Christine Rosen has written an intriguing article about multitasking for the *Toronto Star*. The article, "Can You Finish This Story Without Being Interrupted?" accuses multitasking of undermining our ability to concentrate, pay attention, and decide whether or not information is worthy of our undivided focus.

Rosen marshals the findings of scientific analysis to build her case against multitasking. Among the research she cites:

- A study done in the UK in 2005 claimed that, "Workers distracted by email and phone calls suffer a fall in IQ more than twice that found in marijuana smokers."
- Rene Marois of Vanderbilt University has explored the consequences of multitasking on the efficiency of the brain. Marois' research suggests that the more we jump from task to task, the more energy our brains waste.
- The research of Professor Russell Poldrack of UCLA indicates that distraction causes a physiological learning deficiency. When multitasking, the part of our brains used for storing and recalling information slows down.

Leaders should be warned against the perils of multitasking. For the human mind, more is less. Focus and concentration have immense value and are essential for a person to think clearly and work efficiently. Multitasking will continue to be a temptation in the craze of today's workplace, but leaders doing too much at once will drain their brains and drag down productivity. Perhaps it's time for single-tasking to come back in vogue.

To read "Can You Finish This Story Without Being Interrupted?" by Christine Rosen, visit the [Toronto Star](#) online.

Marketing Maxims

Proverbs scale down our collected wisdom into bite-sized sentences. They are knowledge in shorthand. The value of a proverb derives from its simplicity.

If you're looking for marketing maxims, then point your browser to Seth Godin's blog post on May 10th, 2008. While seasoned marketers may find his list to be elementary, most leaders will welcome it as an easy opportunity to immerse themselves in the basic tenets of marketing.

Seth's list, *What Every Good Marketer Knows*, is jam-packed with memorable maxims, but a few stand out as being indispensable to a fundamental understanding of marketing.

Your best customers are worth far more than your average customers.

One-size-fits-all equals failure. People are unique, and they demand to be treated as such. If you're limited in the resources you can commit to satisfy customers, then it makes sense to delight the ones spending the most money or offering the greatest potential profit.

Making promises and keeping them is a great way to build a brand.

Brands are built on reputation, reputation, and reputation. Underpromise and overdeliver. If you do, you're much more likely to meet and surpass customer expectations.

You can't fool all the people, not even most of the time. And people, once unfooled, talk about the experience.

Customers form perceptions of your products and brand based upon the ways you sell and advertise. For them, perception is reality. If you appear inauthentic or duplicitous, they feel betrayed. Once a customer feels betrayed, you've not only lost him or her, you've damaged potential relationships with every person that hears about the experience.

One disappointed customer is worth ten delighted ones.

Consumers share negative experiences much more readily than positive ones. If you've burnt bridges with a customer, then magnify the loss of their business tenfold to estimate your total losses.

In the googleworld, the best in the world wins more often, and wins more.

When we want information from the internet, we seldom invest the time to visit individual sites. Rather, we type a query into Google's search engine and trust it to gather relevant results for us.

When shopping, our behavior is similar. Inundated with information, we no longer have time to compare the rich variety of flavors and brands in front of us. By default, we flock to what's popularly reckoned to be the best. In this way, the best get richer.

You market when you hire and when you fire. You market when you call tech support and you market every time you send a memo.

Information spreads like wildfire. Your words and actions, even those intended to be private, can and will be used against you in the court of public opinion. Realize that you market whenever you communicate and take advantage by carefully crafting what you say and do.

To peruse the full list of Seth Godin's marketing maxims, [visit his website](#).

[Return to top...](#)

BOOK REVIEW

The New Gold Standard: 5 Leadership Principles for Creating a Legendary Customer Experience Courtesy of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company

by Joseph A. Michelli (McGraw-Hill, 2008)

Ritz-Carlton is synonymous with world-class luxury and impeccable service. In *The New Gold Standard*, Joseph Michelli sets out to identify the guiding principles behind the Ritz-Carlton brand and presents them as applicable lessons for leaders reading his book.

While not completely uncritical of the Ritz-Carlton, the book's intent is to explore the strengths and staying power of the brand. As a result, *The New Gold Standard* is largely a laudatory tribute to the enduring success of the Ritz-Carlton.

In writing *The New Gold Standard*, Michelli traversed the globe, conducted extensive interviews, and prodding into the hotel's history. In doing so, he expertly captured the flavor of the Ritz-Carlton experience and uncovered the leadership tenets that breathe excellence into one of the world's premier luxury brands.

The breadth of Michelli's research manifests itself through richly diverse stories from Ritz-Carlton executives, frontline employees, and guests around the world. Several of the stories are stunning examples of the Ritz-Carlton commitment to go above and beyond the expectations of its guests. The stories recounted by Michelli are far too plentiful and remarkable to be anomalies. Rather, each narrative is representative of the brand's effort to build Mystique - the intangible attractiveness of exceeding guests' expectations and meeting unexpressed needs.

Like Michelli's earlier work, *The Starbucks Experience*, *The New Gold Standard* resonates with readers on account of its accessibility. Just as readers can go to a local Starbucks and drink in its environment, so to can readers reserve a room at the Ritz and bathe in its luxury. The leadership principles shared by Michelli can be witnessed in action, any day of the week at Ritz-Carlton hotels and residences around the world.

Through the course of the book, Michelli explores the following challenges faced by leadership at the Ritz-Carlton properties.

- Operating under the pressure of delighting guests when your reputation and their expectations hold you to the highest possible standards.
- Delicately balancing a commitment to traditional amenities with the flexibility to make improvements to keep pace with the changing demographic of luxury travelers.
- Delivering a consistent Ritz-Carlton experience in diverse cities like Shanghai, Dubai, and Dallas while incorporating the local culture into the unique look and feel of each hotel.
- Selecting the finest employees, affording them opportunities to gain new skills, and empowering them with the resources to craft a "wow" experience unique to every guest.

The up-close and personal access granted to Michelli by The Ritz-Carlton enables him to share, in detail, the strategies and values incorporated by the hotel chain as it navigates the challenges and opportunities in the marketplace of luxury hospitality.

Having written another stellar book, Joseph Michelli must be considered on the short list of today's influential leadership authors. His intriguing look into the Ritz-Carlton abounds with insights and intellectual fodder for leaders aspiring to upgrade the quality of service offered by their organizations.

[Return to top...](#)

QUOTES

Inspiration

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." ~ John Quincy Adams

"Leadership is based on a spiritual quality; the power to inspire, the power to inspire others to follow." ~ Vince Lombardi

"Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be." ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

[Return to top...](#)

For more information on Dr. John C. Maxwell, please [visit our website](#). In our effort to become your new content provider, portions of *Leadership Wired* are often written by editors other than John C. Maxwell and do not necessarily reflect his opinions.

Leadership Wired is available via e-mail on a free subscription basis. You can subscribe by [clicking here](#). Questions about document transmission or editorial comments should be directed to feedback@maximumimpact.com.

This e-mail was sent to john@doe.com because you asked to receive *Leadership Wired*. Changed your e-mail address? [Click here](#). To unsubscribe, [click here](#).

Content from *Leadership Wired* may be used, but must be accompanied by the following credit line in its entirety:

"This article is used by permission from Dr. John C. Maxwell's free monthly e-newsletter, "Leadership Wired," available at www.maximumimpact.com."
This information cannot be used for resale in any manner.

This e-mail is a presentation of Maximum Impact, 3760 Peachtree Crest Dr, Ste A, Duluth, GA, 30097.

THIS IS A POST-ONLY MAILING. Responses are not monitored; please do not respond to this message.