



Book Everyone Communicates, Few Connect

What the Most Effective People Do Differently

John C. Maxwell
HarperCollins Leadership, 2010
Listen now

- play
- pause

00:00
00:00

Recommendation

To learn how to connect well with others, imitate a connection superstar: leadership development expert John C. Maxwell. When he posted a preliminary version of this book on his blog, 100,000 people viewed it, and many offered comments on how to make it better. Maxwell has sold more than 18 million books and his company has taught leadership skills to more than five million people. He offers this book’s simple principles and its very abundant quotations, anecdotes and stories to explain how to build relationships with other people in many settings. Without being preachy – though he is a preacher – he provides an intelligent, purposeful philosophy about connection. Maxwell’s sensible counsel– focus on others, help them, smile – is not earth shattering, but no one could dispute its basic verity. If the book sometimes seems just to skip merrily from one great story to another, that’s part of its charm – and it all adds up to advice that will improve your ability to link with other people. The trick is to put these examples into practice and Maxwell explains how to do that. *BooksInShort* recommends his book to all those who want to improve their public speaking skills and interpersonal connections.

Take-Aways

- If people feel close to you, then they will speak well of you, trust you, go the extra mile for you and enjoy being with you.
- To build a good rapport with others, focus on them, not on yourself.
- To create meaningful bonds, show people you care for them, you want to help them and they can trust you. You must give support to earn it.
- Try to link with people “visually, intellectually, emotionally” and “verbally.”
- Be the first to initiate a relationship with individuals, groups and audiences.
- People often find connecting difficult because they assume too much, act arrogantly, appear indifferent or exert too much control.
- Use the “3S” communication strategy: “Keep it simple. Say it slowly. Have a smile.”
- People will befriend you more readily when you share common bonds.
- In public speaking, be brief, clear, relatable, engaging and direct. Repeat your most important points. Tell stories.
- To inspire others to act, share what they “need to know,” show what they “need to see” and convey your passion about what they “need to feel.”

Summary

To Connect, You Must Communicate

How do you know when you’ve connected well with other people? They go out of their way for you. They speak favorably about you. They bond with you emotionally and communicate openly. They trust you. They exhibit positive energy toward you and enjoy being around you. Connecting meaningfully with others pays

big dividends. People with warm connections face less conflict and enjoy their relationships more. However, forming such links with others requires cutting through the barrage of signals and messages that bombard everyone daily. That means becoming an effective communicator, a skill you can teach yourself – and you'll be glad you learned it.

“Even if connecting with others isn't something you're good at today, you can learn how to do it and become better tomorrow.”

Warm connections depend on recognizing and acknowledging other people's value. Take the focus off yourself and place it on others. Put your ego aside. Learn to work well with others. To connect with people, talk with them and center the conversation on their concerns, not yours. Try to build one-on-one relationships where some “90% of all connecting occurs.” Perfect your skills in this basic area. Then learn to connect with the members of groups and, finally, with people in an audience. This isn't all easy, but it's essential.

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

Consider how someone you are talking to would answer these questions about you:

1. **“Do you care for me?”** – Demonstrate that you truly care about others. Stop fretting about your needs and pay attention to theirs.
2. **“Can you help me?”** – Great salespeople live by this timeworn but true maxim: “Nobody wants to be sold, but everyone wants to be helped.” Instead of looking for people to help you, begin to help others.
3. **“Can I trust you?”** – Love between people is vital, but trust is even more critical. You will never connect with anyone if you are untrustworthy.

“Connection always begins with a commitment to someone else.”

Your agenda is not important to other people, but your help promoting their agendas is. To get people on your side, quickly get on their side. Connecting is that simple, if you do it in a genuine, credible way. How you act is far more meaningful than what you say. In fact, words often have little to do with connecting. The impression you make depends, instead, on how much of yourself you reveal.

“People may hear your words, but they feel your attitude.”

Connecting positively has four components:

1. **“What people see: connecting visually”** – What you look like is far more important than what you say. Dress nicely. Be well-groomed. Smile and use warm, likeable facial expressions. Stand up straight. Move with energy.
2. **“What people understand: connecting intellectually”** – To connect well with others, relate authentic personal experiences they can share, feel and respect. Think of it this way: “When you find yourself, you find your audience.” Charles Laughton, a famous [mid-20th century] actor, once attended a Christmas party in London where the host asked everyone to recite a passage that represented the season. Laughton professionally recited *Psalms* 23 to warm applause. The next turn belonged to an elderly woman who was asleep in her chair in the corner. After her friends woke her up and told her what was going on, she sincerely, but quite unprofessionally, began to say the same psalm: “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...” When she finished, everyone was in tears. Why did her recitation provoke a stronger emotional reaction than the actor's polished declamation? Laughton explained, “I know the psalm; she knows the Shepherd.”
3. **“What people feel: connecting emotionally”** – Attitude makes one speaker more charismatic than the next. If you are caring and confident, people will be drawn to you.
4. **“What people hear: connect verbally”** – Use positive words and use them well. Heed Mark Twain's dictum: “The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter – it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.”

Expend the Energy to Connect

You need to exert genuine energy to connect with others. If you wait for them to move first, you will be alone. Instead of hoping for the perfect situation to arise for initiating a relationship, seize the moment. But don't jump in; prepare what you're going to do and say. Be patient and selfless.

“More than 90% of the impression we...convey has nothing to do with what we actually say.”

Apply the wisdom of Sam Walton's “10-Foot Rule” to the people in your life. Walmart employees make this pledge based on Walton's beliefs: “I solemnly promise and declare that every time a customer comes within 10 feet of me, I will smile, look him in the eye and greet him.” Spend your energy getting to know people, but don't wear yourself thin. When you speak to an audience, the bigger it is, the more energy you must project. To communicate to a group of people, learn about them in advance. When you meet with them, introduce yourself to everyone. Understand that the group owns the meeting – not you. Tell people you appreciate them, whether you are dealing with one person, a small group or a large crowd. Make service your calling card.

“People don't remember what we think is important; they remember what they think is important.”

Even if you are a compelling communicator, having solid relationships with respected people who can share their credibility with you is always a plus. That's how U.S. television psychologist Dr. Phil McGraw became famous. He appeared on Oprah Winfrey's talk show and she made it clear to her viewers that she thought well of him, so they, too, began to hold him in high regard. Of course, credibility doesn't depend only on “who you know,” it also depends on “what you know” and what you achieve. Notable accomplishments draw acclaim and electrify connection.

Finding “Common Ground”

The best way to connect with others is to find common ground. To identify territory you share, learn more about the people you want to reach.

“The most called-upon prerequisite of a friend is an accessible ear.”

Unfortunately, some people find this difficult, often for one or more of these four reasons:

1. **“Assumption – I already know what others know, feel and want”** – When you generalize, you often make errors. Don’t stereotype people and think that you have nothing to learn from them. Inevitably, human beings will surprise you.
2. **“Arrogance – I don’t need to know what others know, feel or want”** – The core of building relationships is caring about others and trying to understand them.
3. **“Indifference – I don’t care to know what others know, feel or want”** – People who feel this way focus only on themselves and can’t possibly connect with others. As comedian George Carlin quipped, “Scientists announced today that they had found a cure for apathy. However, they claim no one has shown the slightest bit of interest in it.”
4. **“Control – I don’t want others to know what I know, feel or want”** – If you withhold yourself and your knowledge from your employees, expect morale to plunge. Heed author Jim Lundy’s “Subordinate’s Lament” about “the uninformed, working for the inaccessible...doing the impossible for the ungrateful.”

“Most people decide very quickly whether they will continue listening to you or simply ‘turn off’ and stop paying attention.”

Don’t make such mistakes. Spend time with others. Listen. Learn their interests; ask about their likes and dislikes. Show appreciation and demonstrate caring. Validate their feelings by telling them you often feel the same way. Show them that you are like them and that you’re on their side.

Using Clarity, Humor and a Smile

In *The Power of Little Words*, John Beckley writes, “The emphasis in education is rarely placed on communicating ideas simply and clearly...our schooling in English teaches us how to fog things up.” How true. Some people assume they must speak and write in a complicated fashion so that others will think they are intelligent and have something important to say. That is exactly backward. To communicate and connect, use easily understood thoughts and ideas. This sounds simpler than it is. As mathematician Blaise Pascal once admitted, “I have made this letter longer than usual because I lack the time to make it short.”

“Perhaps the most effective way to capture people’s interest and make the experience enjoyable when you talk is to include stories.”

To gain attention and regard, provide information and anecdotes that are funny, emotionally stirring, motivational or helpful. You want to make people laugh, tap into their feelings, inspire them and make their lives easier. To win others over, communicate with them according to the “3S strategy:

“I have a collection of laminated cards that contain the best stories I’ve found. When I pull out one of these cards [people] can be sure of four things: I will read them the card. It will be humorous. It will teach a point. And I will read it to them as if it is the first time I have ever read it.”

Keep it simple. Say it slowly. Have a smile.” Then follow these five guidelines:

1. **“Talk to people, not above them”** – No one likes it when others are condescending.
2. **“Get to the point”** – You have something to say, so say it.
3. **“Say it over and over and over and over again”** – Otherwise, people will not recognize the value of what you want to communicate. Author Daniel Pink explains, “Three words are essential to connect with others: 1) brevity, 2) levity and 3) repetition.”
4. **“Say it clearly”** – Don’t speak or write about something until you know your message. Your audience won’t take away what you tell them, but “what they understand.”
5. **“Say less”** – No one ever wants a speaker to talk longer. Caught in a time jam as a speaker on a program that was already running late, author John C. Maxwell promised, “I’ll give my pizza speech. If I don’t deliver in less than 30 minutes, you don’t have to pay me.” And, he delivered.

“Cemetery communication: lots of people are out there, but nobody is listening.”

Engage listeners with lively “quotes, stories and illustrations.”

To energize your speeches:

- **“Take responsibility for your listeners”** – The speaker and the writer are responsible for connecting with the audience. Historian and author Barbara Tuchman reminded herself of this daily by posting this question at her desk: “Will the reader turn the page?”
- **“Communicate in their world”** – Be sure people can relate to your phrases and ideas.
- **“Capture people’s attention from the start”** – And hold it. Avoid what presidential speechwriter Peggy Noonan calls “the hammock speech,” that is, a speech with “a nice strong tree holding it at one end...and at the other end...and in the middle, there is this nice soft section where we all fall asleep.”
- **“Activate your audience”** – Ask questions, get people to engage with each other (they could all shake hands) and urge them to do something physical (“stand and stretch”).
- **“Say it so it sticks”** – Offer vital information, original ideas, startling data and humor.
- **“Be visual”** – Use gestures, props and engaging expressions to be interesting to watch.
- **“Tell stories”** – Sharing great stories is the best way to hold people’s attention.

“As time goes by, the way people live outweighs the words they use.”

Another way to connect positively with people is to motivate them. Use the “Inspiration Equation” to stir them to take meaningful action.

This formula has three elements:

1. **“What people need to know”** – This is crucial. Show others that you are on their side and care about them, that they matter to you and that you expect big things from them.
2. **“What people need to see”** – Demonstrate your conviction, character and credibility.

3. **“What people need to feel”** – Be confident and passionate about your subject. Demonstrate your gratitude for having the privilege of speaking to your audience.

“You Are Your Message”

When you first start to build a connection with people, either in a one-on-one relationship or in a group, how you communicate makes all the difference. Once they know you, credibility will become the most vital factor in maintaining your bonds with them. When Senator Barack Obama campaigned in 2008, everyone could see that he was a strong communicator who had the ability to connect with people across the United States. As president, his credibility as a national leader is far more important than his communication skills. The same is true of you: Once you establish a connection, you must maintain people’s trust. The best way to ensure that others find you trustworthy is to connect with yourself, learn to rely on yourself and be comfortable with caring about yourself. Others will not like you if you do not like yourself. Be accountable for your actions. Always “live what you communicate.”

About the Author

John C. Maxwell is an evangelical Christian pastor, speaker and author, who has sold more than 18 million books in more than 50 languages. He is the author of *Developing the Leader Within You* and *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, among many other books.
