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## **Book Review: The 5 Levels of Leadership (10th Anniversary Edition): Proven Steps to Maximize Your Potential by John C. Maxwell**

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Maxwell in his book presents a structured guide on the role of leadership for the training of new leaders. The author has worked through his writings to enhance people's leadership skills. This edition seeks to expand ideas to face current challenges in leadership. Maxwell's five-level framework lays out a path for individuals to progress from authority and power to transformational leadership. This paper will analyze the pros and cons of Maxwell's framework, considering its significance in today's leadership methods and its suitability in various leadership situations.

Maxwell presents five crucial phases of leadership growth in *The 5 Levels of Leadership* which he outlines as a journey that leaders must go through to achieve their maximum potential (Maxwell, 2021).

- 1) **Position;** The starting phase of leadership, in which people primarily lead due to their job title or position within a company. Authority at this point is based on formal hierarchy, not personal influence.
- 2) **Permission:** Leadership at this stage is achieved by building connections with others. Trust and respect are crucial sources of influence from followers. Leaders are starting to understand that their responsibility involves more than just giving orders; it also involves establishing a connection and earning the trust of their team to be able to lead effectively.
- 3) **Production:** In this stage, leadership is characterized by achievements. The leader demonstrates their value by the concrete results they deliver. Maxwell contends that successful leaders need to go beyond their own achievements in order to motivate and inspire others to work towards shared objectives.

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- 4) **People Development:** The fourth stage is centered on grooming others to become leaders. Maxwell believes that authentic leadership is shown through a leader's capacity to elevate others to higher levels, enabling them to assume more responsibility and leadership positions.
- 5) **Pinnacle:** At the highest level, a leader's impact is significant, reaching further than just immediate outcomes or individual accomplishments. Pinnacle leaders leave a legacy by consistently cultivating new leaders and making a positive impact on the organization or community beyond personal achievements.

The main idea Maxwell conveys in the book is that leadership is continually evolving, rather than remaining constant, and involves both personal development and impact on others. Maxwell argues that leaders who comprehend these levels are in a stronger position to navigate leadership complexities and reach their full potential (Maxwell, 2021).

The author develops the text seeking the improvement of leaders and identifies some factors for the development of new levels of leadership. Two of the core attractions of this book are simplicity and clarity. Maxwell simplifies leadership by categorizing it into five clear and manageable levels for better comprehension. This method is especially beneficial for up-and-coming leaders who might find leadership theory or practice overwhelming. Readers can evaluate their leadership stage and advance by following practical steps provided for each level. This turns the book into a very useful manual for people wanting to enhance their leadership abilities and companies searching for a methodical way to develop leadership.

Maxwell's focus on building relationships and trust, especially during the shift from Position to Permission, stands out as a key aspect of the book. Unlike traditional leadership models that prioritize authority, Maxwell emphasizes the values of trust, respect, and influence. He contends that genuine leadership stems from the capability to establish significant relationships with others, rather than just from holding a specific title or position of authority (Maxwell, 2021). This leadership approach, focused on humans, aligns with current conversations around the significance of emotional intelligence and servant leadership, emphasizing empathy, collaboration, and ethical leadership.

The books "Focus on Legacy" and "Sustainable Leadership" also highlight Maxwell's powerful and inspiring idea of creating a legacy through leadership. At the highest level of leadership, the leader's impact is determined not by their personal achievements, but by their capacity to cultivate upcoming leaders. This concept is in line with current leadership trends that focus on sustainability and lasting effects, in opposition to the transactional leadership methods of earlier generations (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). Maxwell proposes that by developing more leaders, a leader secures the ongoing impact and legacy of their mission even after they have moved on.

Finally, Extensive Relevance in Various Leadership Situations. Maxwell's versatile model is applicable in various leadership situations, such as business, nonprofits, government, education, or personal life. Leaders of all levels of experience find resonance in the book's universal themes of growth, empowerment, and influence. Maxwell's diversified selection of case studies, which includes both historical figures and modern business leaders, illustrates the model's versatility in various contexts, establishing it as a valuable tool for a broad range of individuals.

The criticisms and weaknesses of the books are summarized in four points on the opposite side. The initial issue is oversimplifying the complexities of leadership. Although Maxwell's framework excels in its simplicity, it also presents a notable constraint. Leadership is frequently more intricate and reliant on specific circumstances than the linear development described in the book. Critics claim that Maxwell's model of leadership development is too simplistic, as it outlines a linear progression that may not consider the complex and ever-changing nature of actual leadership obstacles. According to Raelin (2007), successful leadership involves being flexible, understanding the culture of the organization, and effectively managing conflicts and power struggles, aspects that are not adequately covered in the five levels.

Another possible details to rethink of the book is its heavy emphasis on the "Production" phase, which is mainly concerned with tangible achievements and consequences. It is essential that leaders can focus on the development of important components of leadership such as ethical leadership, organizational culture, innovation, teamwork, and trust; on performance and obtaining measurable results (Schein, 2010). Leaders

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must establish a culture of innovation, teamwork and trust, factors that can enrich leadership processes.

Maxwell's focus on practicality, rather than theory, narrows its appeal to scholars or individuals seeking a deeper understanding of leadership theory. The book lacks sufficient discussion of well-known leadership theories like transformational leadership (Bass, 1990), authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), the importance of power and influence in leadership (French & Raven, 1959) and other fundamental leadership theories in the cognitive development. Maxwell's framework mostly overlooks these vital concepts for understanding the complex nature of leadership for brings a more practical and easily understandable approach to the beginner leaders.

The "People Development" stage, although beneficial for fostering others' growth, may also result in a paternalistic leadership style, with the leader asserting an authoritarian or superior attitude over their followers. This might restrict team members' independence and strengthen conventional power systems that hinder creativity and autonomous decision-making (Goleman, 2000). Moreover, the framework does not completely deal with the intricacies of power dynamics, which may occasionally appear in ways that do not support the development of genuinely collaborative or empowering relationships.

Even with its constraints, "The 5 Levels of Leadership" continues to be a crucial tool for leaders in diverse industries. Its focus on building relationships, creating legacies, and empowering others reflects the current trend in leadership theories towards inclusivity, ethics, and sustainability. Additionally, the framework provides actionable tips that are readily applicable in real-life scenarios, making it particularly useful for individuals looking to improve their leadership abilities in a control and systematic way.

The book is especially important for companies looking to cultivate leaders internally, promoting a culture of mentorship and sustainable development. Its principles can be applied in educational environments, community leadership, and political organizations, aiming to inspire and empower individuals to assume leadership positions. Furthermore, Maxwell's emphasis on cultivating upcoming leaders, as opposed to just

reaching immediate goals, aligns with the increasing popularity of sustainable leadership strategies. These strategies prioritize the cultivation of leaders who can continue the legacy after an individual's time in leadership (Bennis & Thomas, 2002).

To sum up, John C. Maxwell's *The 5 Levels of Leadership* (10th Anniversary Edition) offers a clear, simple, and practical framework for improving leadership abilities. The book emphasizes developing connections, trust, and leaving a lasting impact, making it a valuable tool for leaders aiming to enhance their influence. Yet, its straightforwardness and emphasis on outcomes may not completely grasp the intricacies of contemporary leadership, which frequently demands more effective and efficiency strategies. Despite these restrictions, Maxwell's work is still seen as a valuable tool that is very useful for both new leaders and experienced professionals aiming to reach their full potential and promote leadership in others.

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