7 Tips for Leading Your Peers
By: The John Maxwell Company

“To succeed as a 360-Degree Leader who leads peer-to-peer, you have to work at giving your colleagues reasons to respect and follow you. How do you do that? By helping your peers win. If you can help them win, you will not only help the organization, but will also help yourself.” 1

At The John Maxwell Company, we like to refer to leading peer-to-peer as “leading across.” This past week, we began the month by discussing “leading down”. This week, we’ll dive into “leading across” and offer some tips to master the ability to win over your peers.

Here are 7 principles to guide you toward leading across.

1. Understand, practice, and complete the leadership loop.
   “If you want to gain influence and credibility with people working alongside you, then don’t try to take shortcuts or cheat the process.” 2
   The leadership loop begins with caring – taking an interest in people – and ends with succeeding – winning with people. In order to complete the loop, leaders must not skip the steps in between. Take your time. People with big goals want to be on a team with someone who has achieved before. Success begets success.

2. Put completing fellow leaders ahead of competing with them.
   “The whole goal of healthy competition is to leverage it for the corporate win.” 3
   For organizations, success of the whole team is more important than any individual wins. Therefore, build your teammates up and they’ll want to win with you.

3. Be a friend.
   “Good relationships make influence possible, and friendship is the most positive relationship you can develop on the job with your coworkers.” 4
   As leaders, our goal should be to be a friend, rather than find a friend. You may need to continue working at being a friend even if your peers don’t initially reciprocate the efforts. Ultimately, being a friend will give you the opportunity to influence your peers when the time comes.

4. Avoid office politics.
   “The bottom line is that people who might be described as ‘political’ are ruled by their desire to get ahead instead of a desire for excellence, productivity, teamwork, or consistency.” 5
   To succeed at leading across, it’s important to stay true to whom you are and not act differently to win over those with power. That is a surefire way to lose influence among peers. Instead, become a statesman for your organization by keeping the big picture in mind, remaining unselfish, and trying to be a diplomat with your peers.
5. **Expand your circle of acquaintances.**

“To get outside of your comfort zone, why not start with those in your comfort zone? Every friend you have has a friend you don’t have.”

These acquaintances can be crucial connections for you as you grow in leadership and life. As you befriend and lead your peers, your connections may benefit them, as well. You’ll ultimately provide more value and gain more influence among them.

6. **Let the best idea win.**

“Being a 360-Degree Leader and leading across is not about getting your own way. It’s not about winning at all costs. It’s about winning respect and influence with your peers so that you can help the whole team win.”

Having a collaborative spirit helps immensely when you discover that your idea may not be the best idea. As a team player, it’s important to recognize where you can add value when you let your idea go and let the best idea win. That’s when you win friends and influence people.

7. **Don’t pretend you’re perfect.**

“Since nobody is perfect - not you, not your peers, not your boss – we need to quit pretending. People who are real, who are genuine concerning their weaknesses as well as their strengths, draw others to them.”

Pretending we are perfect doesn’t get us anywhere. Instead, admitting faults, asking for advice, worrying less about what others think, being open to learning from others, and putting away pride and pretense are important steps to help us move in the right direction and win over those around us.

Overall, these 7 principles showcase the best ways to lead across and serve as a 360-Degree Leader. While each one takes time, they will undoubtedly help in gaining influence within your organization from wherever you stand. Leaders, what’s your best tip for leading your peers? We’d love to hear! Comment below or share with us on Facebook or Twitter using #360Leader.

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1 The 360 Degree Leader, pg. 159
2 The 360 Degree Leader, pg. 161
3 The 360 Degree Leader, pg. 173
4 The 360 Degree Leader, pg. 176
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7 The 360 Degree Leader, pg. 204
8 The 360 Degree Leader, pg. 206