

**DDNA**  
OF AN ENTREPRENEUR

JOHN MAXWELL

*Hi my name is John Maxwell, and I'm so glad you're here to join me as I talk to you about one of my very favorite subjects, and certainly my very favorite people:*  
**Entrepreneurs.**

I do believe that they make our country great, and I think they make a difference in any country and every culture.

So let's take a look at entrepreneurs and how they work!

I'm so excited because I know that many of you really have a desire to sharpen your entrepreneurial skills, and perhaps you've thought, "Am I one?" Or, "How do I become one?"

What I want to share with you is what an entrepreneur looks like, and what their DNA looks like.

*John Maxwell*



# Lesson 1

*Visualization,  
Actualization, Hard Work,  
and Desire.*

# 1



## Entrepreneurs do two things. They visualize, and they actualize.

Entrepreneurs look around and they visualize what could happen if they seize that opportunity, and they see it all the time. The greatest ones, the ones who are highly successful, do more than just see the opportunity, they actualize, they *seize* the opportunity.

They see it, and they act upon it. It's in the action, it's in the seizure of that opportunity that defines an entrepreneur.

In other words, entrepreneurs are what I call "make it happen people."

They're the kind of person where they go out and nothing is happening, but when they're finished, something is happening. They have the ability to stir up the water a little bit, they have the ability to cause action. They bring home the bacon instead of belching out the bologna.

They're really committed to making it happen.

Perhaps you've taken the strengths finder test. I have, and in the S.F. test, my five strengths are that I'm an activator, an achiever, a maximizer, I am strategic and I have woo. As soon as I looked at the test and saw that, I realized I had the strengths of an entrepreneur.

Perhaps you want to take that same test. As I teach the first three strengths of an entrepreneur, look at yourself and ask, "Hey, how did I do?" I suggest you rank yourself on a scale from one to ten.

Read the lesson and put down what you think your number is, and then at the end of these three lessons we'll kind of evaluate and see how much DNA of an entrepreneur you have.

So, let's get started! The first thing about entrepreneurs is that they're self starters, they absolutely motivate themselves. In fact, they don't look for anyone to motivate them, they don't look for an experience to motivate them, they have the ability to take action on their own.

Now, experiences DO motivate us, people DO motivate us, but there is a difference between me motivating myself and then letting those other aspects motivate me. There's a vast difference between that, and waiting for those people, those experiences to motivate me.

So you have to simply ask yourself, "How do I do in this area? Am I self motivated? Am I a self starter?" Beyond that, "Do I start early?"

If entrepreneurs understand one thing, they understand there is great value to being in front and beginning early. In fact I would say to you, that starting early is essential to an entrepreneur's success.

**Start fast, think fast, change fast, fix fast.**

Aren't you tired of always waiting for people who always need another cup of coffee? Just to kind of get going and just to crank them up?

People ask me, "John, who motivates you?" I **motivate me**. And what motivates me? The very fact that I love to add value to people.

Entrepreneurs are motivated by where they're going, what they see, what they're trying to accomplish. And the best part of my day is in the morning when I wake up, and it's the best time of my day because when I wake up I realize this is my chance, opportunities are before me, and I naturally migrate to them.

The value of starting early is huge. I had lunch with Gail Devers, the most decorated track female athlete in U.S. history. At the time she was trying out for another Olympics. I thought I'd have a little fun at the end of the meal, she's read a lot of my books and such. "Gail," I said, "I think I could beat you at a hundred yard dash."

You should have seen her face, and she said, "What do you mean you could beat me at a hundred yard dash?"

I smiled, "I think if we raced 100 yards, I could win."

The competitiveness in her, I mean she's ready to take off her heels and go out in front of that restaurant and run a block with me!

I got her right on the edge of her seat, and said, "Gail, if you gave me an eighty yard head start, I think I could win a hundred yard dash."

She just burst out laughing. Throughout the entire meal, I thought about that eighty yards. I wanted to say seventy, but I wasn't really sure if I could win if I had a seventy yard head start, but I knew if I had an eighty yard head start I could win!

What does that mean? **What that means is starting early beats being fast.** If I can get an eighty yard head start on this incredible Olympic athlete, I can win the race.

**There is huge value in starting early. Being a self starter is what allows you to do that, and entrepreneurs have that DNA in them.**

# 2

## Entrepreneurs work harder than others.

I love this quote by Clay Bathel, "I admire entrepreneurs because they gave up their eight hour a day job, to work sixteen hours."

And that, that's an entrepreneur! They give up that secure job where they can get a paycheck and work eight hours, and all of a sudden they're working on their dream, and they're starting early. Now they're working sixteen hours, and they're loving what they do.

In fact, entrepreneurs don't call their work, "Work." In fact, I'm not sure work is work. Unless you'd rather be doing something else. As long as you're doing what you love, is it really work?

Entrepreneurs love what they're doing, and they're consumed by it. They don't count their hours, they're absolutely enjoying making a difference. People will sometimes look at me and say, "John I think you're a workaholic." I'm not a workaholic, I'm a work-a-frolic!

I love what I do, this is enjoyable, this is not work for me. I am helping people, I am making a difference, I add value to others.

# 3

## *Entrepreneurs have a strong desire to win.*

The third thing that entrepreneurs do, and it's just the DNA of them, is that they have a strong desire to win. They like to win. They like it so much that every day, they pursue it.

Being successful, being on top, being number one.

That's an entrepreneur, they have a strong desire to win. They love what they do, and they hate losing. You know, we have a culture today, and this is something as entrepreneurs we need to recognize, that just kind of wants to give everyone a trophy. You know, when little league season is over, everyone gets a trophy, whether they won or whether they lost.

This is not good.

You should get a trophy when you deserve a trophy. You should get a trophy because you worked hard and you won. If we're going to develop great countries, and great entrepreneurs, and become strong, we need people who strive to be above average.



Entrepreneurs, because they want to win, keep score. People always say, "Let's not keep score," or they'll say, "It's only a game."

Well, let me say something: Entrepreneurs, they want to keep score. In my book *The Seventeen Laws of Teamwork*, I talk about the **Law of the Scoreboard**, and the Law of the Scoreboard says that a team can make adjustments if it knows where it stands.

I love sports. And I've noticed the difference between a good coach and a great coach. Almost all coaches, and good coaches for sure, have a pre-game plan. They have a good pre-game plan, but the great coaches adjust at halftime. They adjust from what they see in the first half, and some of their pre-game plans aren't going to work anymore, and they have the ability to change fast, be flexible, and adjust.

Entrepreneurs are that way because as they go out and keep score and try to win, they realize very quickly that what they had planned at the very beginning, is going to need changes. They make them, and the reason they make them so quickly is because they have such a passion to win.

People who are slow to make adjustments usually don't have that same passion to win. And entrepreneurs, they do that well.

*In this lesson, we have learned about the DNA of an entrepreneur.*

*Look at those three things for just a moment.*

*Ask yourself,  
"From a one to a ten, how well did I do?"*



# Lesson 2

*Leadership, Action,  
and P.R.O.B.L.E.M.S.*

# 4

## *Entrepreneurs never follow, but they also seldom lead.*

On my first lesson of the DNA of an Entrepreneur, I talked about three characteristics of entrepreneurs. That they are self starters, they work harder than others, and they have a strong desire to win. Now as we pick up in the second lesson of the DNA of an Entrepreneur, we move on to number four, and number four is maybe, of the ten, the most surprising.

Entrepreneurs never follow, but they also seldom lead.

If you're a self starter, you're not following anything. The reason they aren't followers is because it's a waiting game, and entrepreneurs, it's not in their DNA to want to wait around and hope that something good will happen.

They aren't waiting for someone else to make their day, they want to go out and make their own day. They don't accept their life, they lead their life. So they're not a follower, that's for sure, but I also said they seldom lead.

Many times, an entrepreneur is pursuing their dream in such a way, they really don't want to wait on anyone else. They don't want to develop anyone else, it's kind of like, "Don't bring a bunch of people around to slow up my progress, I want to get there, and I want to get there as fast as I can."

So the good news is, they take off. And because they are creative, and they seize opportunity, they begin to have some success under their belt.

Others would probably slow them down.

# Entrepreneurs have a bias for action.

Entrepreneurs have what I call a bias for action. They love action, but because they love action, they don't have the patience to develop other people. When you develop other people, you can't go very fast.

I've often said that leaders, when they cross the finish line, are never first because they have to bring other people with them, and if you bring people with you, you have to slow down your pace. Entrepreneurs do not like to slow down their pace.

I was in South Africa recently, and I saw on the wall  
before I was getting ready to leave:

**"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."**

An entrepreneur likes to go fast in the beginning, better than far, and so there's a tendency for them to kind of move out and take off and build something, but there's a downside.

I speak from personal experience when I tell you this.

Even though I started my career as a pastor, I was a very entrepreneurial pastor. I went to a little country church that only had three people on a Sunday, Margaret and I were two of them, so I mean, this is as little as you could get. We started meeting people, and networking, and adding value to people, and in just under three years, we grew that place from three people to three hundred people.

I loved it, and as I moved on to my next assignment, within six months I became greatly disappointed, because the church that I had grown from three to three hundred had suddenly gone down below one hundred again.

And I thought, "Wow, what happened?" What happened was simple: I did everything.

In fact, people called me the superstar pastor, because I was running around and doing all of it, but I didn't train anyone. I didn't develop anyone. I didn't teach anyone any skills. Because I didn't develop people, when I left, it fell fast. So there's a real downside to this "never follow, seldom lead."

*If you have that DNA of an entrepreneur,  
if you just slow down 10%,  
and start to train and develop other people,  
you'll build something longer  
and more lasting.*

*Because you slowed down just enough  
to lead and develop others.*



# 5

## Entrepreneurs love problems.

The fifth characteristic of an entrepreneur is that they love problems. And when I say they love problems, *they love problems*.

In fact, I can tell you one thing that quickly separates entrepreneurs from those who are not. People that aren't entrepreneurs, they don't like problems. In fact, I learned a long time ago, if you can help people solve their problems, you can develop a great career just doing that.

Most people, they want to rationalize problems, they want to avoid problems, but entrepreneurs go around looking for problems, because they know within that problem is opportunity. They live for problems, they learn from problems, they get leverage from problems, they love problems.

# P.R.O.B.L.E.M.S.

In 1979 I wrote my first book, *What is a Problem?* I then took the letters in "problems," and I made it an acrostic.

The letters **P** is the fact they're predictors, I promise you this, problems after a while will predict what kind of a person you are. They're **R**eminders, they remind us that life is tough. There's no such thing as a walk in the park.

**O** reminds us that there are opportunities, every problem has within it an opportunity that'll make you better.

**B** stands for blessings. Problems are not all negative; sometimes they point us in a more beneficial direction.

Or, they result in an outcome that's better than we'd planned.

The **L** stands for the fact that a problem is a lesson, they teach us something. So the question is not, "Did you have a problem?"  
The question is, "What did you learn from it?"

The letter **E** is for everywhere. I've got problems, you've got problems, all God's children have problems. Trust me! It's okay! Entrepreneurs know that. Everywhere, problems are messages!

That's what the **M** stands for. They're messages like the dashboard in our car. The light goes on, and it means something.

That brings us to the letter **S**, which stands for the fact that problems are solvable. Here is where the DNA of an entrepreneur sets them apart from others.

Most people when they try to solve a problem come to a dead end. Entrepreneurs see that there are several ways to solve a problem, because they believe that everything has an option in life.

They'll just keep moving and maneuvering around until they realize and find out how to answer that problem, and find that solution.

*So when you say you have a problem,  
entrepreneurs say,*

*"I'm going to have a wonderful day! I'm going to find  
how to solve that problem, and I'm going to make it  
an opportunity to be successful."*





# 6

## Entrepreneurs want to prove something to themselves.

In other words, they want to put themselves out on the line, they want to make sure they have what it takes to be a winner.

They don't want to think they can do it, they want to *know* they can do it. There is a world of difference between the person who thinks they can, and the person who knows they can.

Entrepreneurs want to cross that line, they want to take action, they want to make a commitment to do something to find out if they've got the stuff.

If they find out they don't have what it takes,  
do you know what they don't do?

**They don't quit.**

They just go learn some more, get some more experience, and then try again. They just keep coming back because they know that if they put themselves out on that line, and they start to succeed, that will give them confidence, which will give them courage.

# 7

## Entrepreneurs push on, in spite of difficulties.

They don't look at a barrier or an obstacle as something that is insurmountable. They look at it and say, "Well there's a way to climb that, there's a way to get around that."

They just absolutely don't take no for an answer. They have the ability to bounce back, to get back up. When I talk about entrepreneurs I use this statement to capture people's attention; entrepreneurs are never sick.

Now, we're all human, we all get sick. What do I mean by the fact that they never get sick? What I mean is that if they're sick, they still show up. They don't give in to what their body says they're doing, they say, "This is it. I've got this commitment, I've got this responsibility on me.

I want to fulfill this obligation."

I've been privileged to speak over 1,200 times in my life. That's a lot of gigs. And I've only missed six in my entire life. And three of them were because the plane couldn't land in bad weather, and so I had to go to another city.

I've spoken in Asia, where I had vertigo so bad, they had to walk me on stage and sit me in a chair while the whole room literally would spin. I spoke the day after I broke my leg and I was in traction on stage. In fact, I had a nurse sitting right beside me to make sure I kept it in place.

Entrepreneurs are so passionate about what they do, they don't let stuff that gets in their life delay or keep them from their mission.

Now we've talked in our first lessons about seven DNA's, what is an entrepreneur like?

You've been looking and evaluating yourself from about a one to a ten, and I hope you're doing well, I hope you're enjoying this. I hope you're feeling within yourself, that I really need to pursue that dream.

Well if you are, there's one more lesson, I'll give you the final three parts of the DNA of an entrepreneur.



# Lesson 3

*Opportunity, Creativity  
& Discouragement*

# 8

## *Entrepreneurs value opportunity more than security.*

There have been seven major changes in my life, changes where I moved to a new city, or perhaps started a new career. Out of the seven major changes I've made, about five of them I've gone, where there was less money than what I was already making.

I went because there was more opportunity. You know you're an entrepreneur when you're willing to give up something that you already have secured because you think that perhaps the opportunity is greater.

If you say, "Wow, I want that security," you're not an entrepreneur, you're just a beautiful person who wants to have a solid, secure job.

Entrepreneurs love opportunity, and the reason they love it is because that door to opportunity is going to lead to better things. The mistake that we make is when we open the first door of and assume that on the other side is opportunity. Seldom is that true.

When you get through that first door of opportunity, guess what, you come to another door, which is the second door of opportunity, and you go through it. You keep going through the third door of opportunity, through the fourth door of opportunity.

Before you make it big in life, you have to go through several doors of opportunities, and entrepreneurs aren't discouraged by that.

They realize that as they move, resources begin to unfold and opportunities begin to come into focus.

I was just having a dinner conversation, and the woman to my left said, "John, in your life, what is the most significant thing that has ever happened?"

I thought back to 1983 when I was in Jackson, Mississippi speaking to 31 leaders in a room, and at the end of the day, one of the leaders came up to me and said, "We loved what you taught today, when can I hear you speak again?" I said, "Well I don't know, maybe a year, maybe a couple years, I've got to go back to where I work." They replied, "We want to hear you all the time! We would like to catch you on a consistent basis."

Then the idea happened. I said, "What would you do if I went back to my staff and we did a teaching on leadership and we would record it. Then we could send it to you on a monthly basis?" They said, "Oh we would love that, how much would something like that cost?" I said, "Oh, I don't know, probably five dollars a tape?" And so I sent around a legal pad, and thirty out of thirty one leaders signed up to receive that tape.

I went back to San Diego, and sat down with my key players, and told them we were going to start a tape of the month club, and that was exactly what we did. And every month I'd gather material, and every month we'd send a tape out, first to thirty people, then to three hundred, then to three thousand, then thirty thousand.

Then **one hundred thousand people** were listening to my monthly tapes.

Going back to the doors of opportunity, the first door was just going and doing a teaching lesson, but as I taught lessons I also began to develop materials. I developed material, until finally I had enough material to write books.

So I started writing books. Until a few years ago, I was in New York City with the publisher Random House, they told me I had written more material in leadership than any other man in the world.

Now all of that happened, and now I've been named by Inc Magazine as the number one leadership expert in the world, and the American Management Association as the number one leader.

People say, "Well how did you get there?" How I got there, started in Jackson, Mississippi, in a Holiday Inn with thirty people. Then they say, "Is there anyway we can hear from you often?" You never know, when you push open that door, no matter how small that door is, what's going to happen to you.

*An entrepreneur is absolutely charged. Emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually, by what's on the other side of that door.*



# 9

## *Entrepreneurs stay creative when others quit.*

There just isn't any quit in an entrepreneur. Remember when dictionaries used to be paper? I can remember many many years ago I decided I wasn't going to talk about quitting, I wasn't going to put it in my vocabulary.

In fact, I took out my scissors and pulled out my dictionary and cut out "Quit." I'd tell others that "quit" wasn't even in my dictionary. That's the thing about entrepreneurs, they just don't think of stopping, and why is that?

Because they are possibility thinkers, they are abundant in their thinking instead of having a scarcity mindset.

If I think there are very few answers in life, if I think there are very few opportunities in life, if I think there are going to be very few times for me to have an opportunity to do well, I'm gonna pull back, and I'm going to lose that creativity. My creativity stems from the fact that I always know there's going to be an answer. I always know there's a way.

People who can't figure it out or people who stop short of those options, I always look at them and say, "Don't you understand? You're short-cutting yourself, you're not giving yourself every opportunity to be that successful person that you really want to be."

Entrepreneurs stay creative when other people quit. That's an entrepreneur, that's what they do, and that's why they do so well.



# 10

## *Entrepreneurs will not allow discouragement to get the best of them.*

I had a friend one time who was an entrepreneur, and he said, "John, I'm never down." And I said, "What do you mean? Everyone is down sometimes." And he said, "I'm either up, or I'm getting up."

That's an entrepreneur.

So let's review,  
from a one to a ten how did you do?

- *Entrepreneurs are self starters.*
- *They work harder than others.*
- *They have a strong desire to win.*
- *They never follow, they seldom lead.*
  - *They love problems.*
- *They want to prove something to themselves.*
  - *They press on in spite of difficulty.*
- *They value opportunity more than security.*
  - *They stay creative when others quit.*
- *And finally, they just don't stay discouraged.*

*I hope you've done well. My name is John Maxwell.  
We have a wonderful organization,  
the John Maxwell Team.*

*And if you've scored pretty well on this, and you've  
got a dream, and you think you've got a little more in  
you then what's coming out,  
I want to encourage you.*

*You may not only have the DNA of an entrepreneur,  
you may have the DNA of a future  
John Maxwell Team member. I would love that.*



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