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alized context. Indeed, mission and cultural intelligence are inseparable.

Cultural Insights for Christian Leaders is a valuable resource for any leader who is working in a multicultural or cross-cultural context. It is written in a style that is easy to read, well organized, and very focused. The author's line of thought and reason are clear. I strongly recommend this book for Christian leaders in the globalized church.

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LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

A REVIEW OF THE JOHN MAXWELL CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

By Nishanth Thomas

Abstract: There are numerous leadership and coaching certifications currently available on the market. This review focuses on the John Maxwell Certification Program and describes the advantages and disadvantages of the program, concluding with recommendations for those considering the program.

Introduction

We live in a world where leadership, speaking, training, and coaching are becoming critical parts of the life skills required for almost every personal and professional role. This is especially true for ministry-related roles. Consequently, professionals, professors, pastors, ministry leaders, students, and future leaders greatly benefit from receiving leadership, speaking, and coaching training.

Several leadership programs are available today, but for the purposes of this review, only the John Maxwell Certification Program (JMCP) is discussed, as it is one of the few prominent leadership and coaching programs that integrates Christian leadership principles for the development of self, team, and the organization (John Maxwell Certification Program, 2018). Individuals who complete the program become part of The John Maxwell Team (JMT).

John C. Maxwell is a professing Christian who served as a pastor during his early ministry years. He is the leader and founder of the JMCP and is an internationally recognized leadership expert, speaker, coach, and author who has sold more than 19 million books and trained over 6 million leaders worldwide (John Maxwell Certification Program, 2018). He has also spoken multiple times at the Global Leadership Summit and is a *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Business Week* best-selling author (Potempa, 2015). Maxwell is the leadership coach for several Fortune 500 companies, including Microsoft Corporation and Chick-fil-A (John Maxwell Certification Program, 2018). Additionally, certified John Maxwell Team Members have trained leaders at several prominent companies (Businesses or Organizations, 2018). In 2014, Maxwell was voted the world's number one most-influential leadership expert by *Inc.* magazine and was voted the "#1 Leader in Business" by the American Management Association (American Management Association, 2015; Haden, 2014).

Program Highlights

The benefits of enrolling in the JMCP include becoming a better leader, increasing influence, and adding value to whichever setting an individ-

ual is currently called to, including family, church, ministry, or work (John Maxwell Certification Program, 2018). John Maxwell himself participates and shares from his more than forty-five years of experience in live certification events and online training videos. Additionally, for those interested in deriving an income from this venture, the certification and license permits individuals to “(c)coach, teach, and speak to any individual, to any company, and to any organization, anywhere in the world, using the proven Maxwell Method including John C. Maxwell’s curriculum, products, and books.” Additionally, the program includes access Maxwell’s coaching manuals, speaking scripts, workbooks, PowerPoint presentations, and facilitator’s guides. Finally, “the income-based opportunity permits individuals to keep 100% of their income from business opportunities” (John Maxwell l certification Program, 2018).

All basic members have access to the following leadership tracks, in addition to many of Maxwell’s book-related trainings and other resources:

- Coach training involves thirteen hours of video coach training, which includes skill development for both “one-on-one and group coaching skills, review of coaching manuals, setting up coaching fees, and a training workbook guide” (John Maxwell Certification Program, 2018).
- Speaker training involves six sets of speaking scripts, keynotes, and presentations. Additionally, there is a six-hour speaker training workshop on “presentation and technique training, guidance on setting up speaking fees, recommendations on speaking event coordination, and training workbook guide” (John Maxwell

Certification Program, 2018).

- Sales training involves the completion of five hours of video sales training, which addresses “telephone and email introduction skills, cold calling and networking skills, referral strategies, sales scripts, client discovery questionnaire, and closing skills” (John Maxwell Certification Program, 2018).
- Marketing and social media training involve full access to MarketSmart, “a comprehensive, multi-module marketing system developed exclusively for members of The John Maxwell Team.” Other resources include video presentations on “how to market self to build a profitable speaking and coaching business, training on pricing, social media techniques, and strategies for developing audience” (John Maxwell Certification Program, 2018).
- International Maxwell Event (IMC) is a three-day, live certification event conducted twice annually in Florida includes interaction with John Maxwell, “practical skills training, breakout sessions, the ability to network with other team members, and best practices education for coaching, training and speaking” (John Maxwell Certification Program, 2018).
- Members can also sign up for Mentorship (a higher membership tier, requiring an annual payment in addition to the initial investment to be a certified John Maxwell Team Member). This provides the opportunity for members to receive daily live calls, archived calls, mentorship, and access to numerous other resources.

Program Advantages

Enrolling in the JMCP includes several advantages in addition to those

listed previously, including:

Cost

- Numerous promotions throughout the year that offer an affordable enrollment cost.
- Option to pay a one-time membership fee using numerous payment plans (payment is required within one year of initial enrollment).
- Substantial discounts provided to family members seeking certification.

Customer Service

- Outstanding live support offered in resolving member issues. This is repeatedly witnessed through responsiveness to customers in different online forums.

Reviews

- Multiple success stories of individuals who have used the training to speak nationally and internationally, based on online research and the opinions of those interviewed as part of the compiling this review.
- Many positive reviews on Trustpilot, including reviews from numerous verified purchases: 88% excellent rating based on 250 reviews as of September 5, 2018 (John Maxwell Team Review, 2018).

Team

- A strong community, and access to a closed Facebook group that serves to encourage members.
- The development of confidence and credibility through co-branding with John Maxwell.
- The opportunity to network and be part of a growing diverse group of twenty thousand members worldwide.

Training

- Access to a community of thousands of top leaders in every field.
- Positively rated access to key leaders through the online platform and live calls.
- An archive of prior calls to help members.
- Comprehensive training and resources in speaking, coaching, and marketing, with worksheets, games, and speaker scripts.
- An outstanding three-day IMC live certification event.
- The option to receive advanced training, support, and mentoring through the additional-cost mentorship program.
- Training from the best faculty leaders in the market, including John Maxwell himself, many of who are committed Christians.

Program Disadvantages

The biggest concern would be what happens to the certified team members and the organization if John Maxwell leaves the certification program. How will the organization continue marketing and/or rebranding itself? A major part of the value and marketability of this organization could potentially decline.

Other concerns include:

Company ratings

- Some online reviews have expressed concern about the potentiality of this program using a multi-level marketing model. The researcher does not believe this is the case. However, current members at the mentorship level do get a referral bonus of \$1,000 for every new member they bring to the JMCP.
- On Glassdoor, some individuals have expressed concerns (low pay, subpar values, commission-driven mindset, and overwhelming workload) about working for the John

Maxwell Company (not to be confused with JMCP, though they have the same founder) (The John Maxwell Company Glassdoor Rating, 2018).

- In the last three years, five complaints have been filed against JMT with the Better Business Bureau (BBB), a prominent company that rates other businesses; however, all have been resolved favorably as of August 23, 2018. Additionally, JMT does not have a BBB rating (The John Maxwell Team BBB Rating, 2018).

Content and website access

- Accessing material on smart devices is a challenge as the website has not yet been designed for this purpose.
- Navigating the resource list can occasionally be a bit challenging because it seems disorganized, and new members can potentially feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of resources.
- Some JMT members living overseas have expressed concerns with mentorship because they cannot participate in the live calls due to time zone differences.
- Some online reviewers have claimed that certain resources mentioned in video trainings are not available for download or are not accurately placed.
- The JMT website (<http://john-maxwellteam.com/>) does not use HTTPS protocol (a standard for secure websites).
- The website and resource access page seem outdated and are not user-friendly.

Cost

- Basic membership and certification costs \$4,000 to \$6,000, excluding travel-related expenses to the live IMC Event. Please note

that program costs vary by thousands of dollars depending on the time of sign-up and promotional offers available.

- Individuals considering this program as a business venture (to set up their own coaching, consulting, or speaking business) should ideally have a background in sales, building and managing clientele, and delivery of products. Additionally, they would need to invest a substantial amount of time in growing the business (three years or more), have a business plan, be willing to invest additional capital, and be willing to risk business failure. These are the necessary entrepreneurial risks required to succeed:
- The full benefit of the certification (this especially applies to those planning on considering this as a business venture) can only be reached through enrolling in Mentorship (for an additional investment followed by annual payments).
- A refund policy is offered to those who wish to discontinue the program; however, numerous stipulations must be met, including attending the live IMC Event in person, which automatically deters individuals from requesting a refund because they lose a substantial amount of money in the process of traveling.
- For those who have enrolled in the extended payment plan (payment is still due within a year), resources can only be accessed based on the level of payment completed, which can prove to be frustrating.

Team

- Some online reviewers have expressed concerns about what could be perceived as more atten-

tion being provided to new members and minimal attention being provided to longer-term members.

- The recent rapid expansion of the company has the potential to lower the value of the certification in the long run because the market is flooded with JMT certified members.

Theology

- A major concern revolves around theological issues in John Maxwell's leadership principles drawn from Scripture passages. Dr. Richard Howe, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Apologetics at Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, has published a twenty-page review addressing these concerns. Dr. Howe concludes his review by stating that John Maxwell is "a sincere Christian who cares deeply about the church. But his misuse of Scripture, his tacit endorsements of New Age writers and doctrines, and his questionable doctrines of psychology and theology should give any Christian concern in the use of his material in otherwise legitimate local church initiatives" (Howe, 2012). This researcher fully agrees with the concern of proof-texting being a repeated issue in multiple devotionals published by John Maxwell, although this rarely occurs in the professional training program.

Conclusion

Readers should bear in mind that the reviewer could not address several other aspects due to space limitations. This review, therefore, aims to provide a balance of both pros and cons by focusing on categories that are not extraneous but central from a customer-centered perspective, especially as it pertains to long-term

investment for personal and professional growth.

The John Maxwell Certification Program is intuitive, and has several support resources, prominent faculty who are usually committed Christians, over twenty thousand members worldwide, and comprehensive digital resources. It is a great investment for those entering the field of leadership and for those who want to invest in using the resources provided by Maxwell, to build their business, or have a supplemental source of income through being a John Maxwell certified trainer, speaker, or coach. It is relatively affordable as compared to other programs, has many positive ratings, and appears to be on an upward trajectory. In the researcher's opinion, the basic program is best suited for budding leaders who wish to utilize Maxwell's teaching and material to learn and grow in being a leader or coach and gain credibility by being part of the JMT.

As is true with any leadership training, unless there is a substantial investment of time in learning, a consistent practical application by necessity, and an annual financial commitment (by joining the Mentorship and then the Club level [Executive Director], both of which require an annual fee in addition to the initial investment for JMCP and are highly recommended, if not essential, for those planning to build a business using this program), the benefits of the program are questionable.

Additionally, individuals may benefit more from enrolling in a college or university degree-granting program, which may offer a better return on the investment.

For those who still have questions or concerns about JMCP, it may be most practical to test and witness for themselves by first subscribing to the

free John Maxwell devotionals, reading a couple of Maxwell's books, talking to JMT members who have completed the certification program, and then possibly talking to a JMCP customer service representative about the advantages of the program (Subscribe to Minute with Maxwell, 2018).

Disclaimer: All claims made in this review are true for cases that the researcher has observed or other reviewers observed. All sources cited in this review have been vetted to the best of the researcher's ability and in good faith that the sources of this information are sharing with full accuracy and transparency. The John Maxwell Team was provided the opportunity to review this article and suggest corrections for any factual errors. The feedback provided by JMT was only incorporated into the review after substantial verification of the validity of the feedback.

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