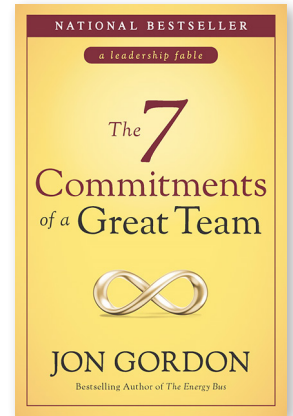




# Executive Book Summaries<sup>®</sup>

## The 7 Commitments of a Great Team

by **Jon Gordon**



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### THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

This special book is built on real experiences, hard-earned insights, and the powerful lessons that come from working with teams. Many of the moments within its pages are inspired by true stories. While the story is fictional, it's rooted in events that truly happened—experiences that have touched lives and shaped perspectives. This book brings together the best of what has been learned, taught, experienced, and felt, with the hope that it will inspire you, too.

In *The Seven Commitments of a Great Team*, Jon Gordon uses his own experiences with being coached and applies it to all aspects of life. In this book, readers are able to understand what makes a strong team, and how to rebuild them when they are failing. The seven commitments serve as a guide for anybody in a leadership position who is not only trying to make their company stronger, but how to show their employees or teams how valuable they are.

### IN THIS EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY:

- Discover strategies to use to craft any high-performing team.
- Learn how to construct team-building exercises.
- Understand the balance between accountability and encouragement.
- Form relationships that are stronger even after encountering adversity.

### Teammates Are Forever

Tim sat beside Coach Richie's bed and held his hand. It was the same hand that he shook when he was offered a scholarship to play ball for him 30 years earlier. Coach Richie's grip was different then—strong, powerful, affirming. He scanned his thin, pale face and wondered what you say to the man who gave you so much and changed the course of your life.

Coach Richie's eyes lit up for a moment. "Remember, kid, teammates are forever. Teammates are forever," he said before closing his eyes again.

"So are coaches who change your life," said Tim as Coach fell back to sleep.

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### Disconnected, Discouraged, Disappointing Results

As Tim drove to the airport, Coach's words "Teammates are forever" kept running through his mind. He couldn't stop thinking about them. Are teammates really forever?

Tim couldn't help but think of his own team at work. Was he helping them get better? No, he wasn't. They were going through the motions. Disengaged. Apathetic. Complacent. They were on a team but they weren't a real team. They were disconnected, discouraged, and delivering disappointing results. He was at a loss of what to do.

How do you get a team that is simply going through the motions to create momentum? How do you get people who are focused on their own careers to care about other team members?

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### Commitments Are Greater Than Goals

Tim recalled a powerful experience that had a huge impact on him and the team. It was the beginning of his sophomore season. The previous season hadn't turned out the way they had hoped. They had a losing record and were frustrated because they had so much talent. On the first day of training camp, Coach Richie stood in the meeting room in front of the team.

"I want you all to write down your goals for the season," he declared. "You got five minutes to do this."

After a bunch of the guys shared their commitments, Coach Richie said, "So now you see why I had you guys

do this exercise. You were excited when you shared your goals but that excitement easily wears off when you are confronted with adversity, inconveniences, and distractions. When you shared your commitments, you were more intentional, serious, and focused. Your commitments create a standard and if you keep your commitments and live up to the standard, you will much more likely achieve your goals. This season I'm also going to share with you our 6 Commitments as a team and program."

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### A Visit to Vino

Tim woke up the next morning thinking about his old teammate Vino. They hadn't seen each other in years but they shared the bond of a powerful moment as teammates their senior year. Coach Richie called them both into his office and let them know they weren't chosen as captains by the team because they weren't as popular as the other guys. But he saw them as leaders and wanted them to help lead the team, even though they didn't have a title.

It was a defining moment in their lives, and Vino would go on to lead one of the top sports marketing agencies in the world. Tim thought about how Vino was thriving, while he himself was currently struggling. He figured Vino would have some great ideas on how he could turn around his team and company.

"Do you remember the 6 Commitments Coach taught us?" Vino laughed. "Remember them? They've been a huge key to my success."

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### Commitment #1: Commit to the Vision and Mission of the Team

After Coach Richie had each teammate share their commitments, he said it was time for practice, and they ran out of the team meeting room and onto the practice field.

"Last year we allowed too many things to divide us. Last year we weren't one team. This year we are going to become one united team. This year my job and all of our jobs is to create a team with oneness in mission and vision. A team that is divided is weak. A team that becomes one is powerful and strong. We are all going to become one team, face the same direction, and commit to a shared vision and mission."

Vision: Become One Gritty Team That Competes Like Champions.

A season is like a roller coaster, with ups and downs, and when you're up you can't get too high on yourself.

Mission: Define and elevate this program. Set the standard and inspire teams after us to reach an even higher level.

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## Attack a New Opportunity

A week later the team had their first scrimmage of the preseason, and it didn't go well.

"From this moment on, we are not defending anything but our goal. We're going to attack a new opportunity every moment, every game. We will not focus on the expectations others have for us. We will focus on our commitments and let those commitments drive our results. Do you hear what I'm saying?" Coach hollered to the team.

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## Commitment #2: Commit to Staying Positive Together

Coach Richie could feel the tension rising. Training camp was taking its toll. The guys' bodies were tired and sore. Their minds were reeling. Some were asking themselves if they were good enough to make the team.

"We have to stay positive together," Coach yelled, emphasizing the final word. "Together is the key. The collective positivity and belief of our team is the result of each one of you choosing to stay positive and believe in our vision, our mission, our ability to win, and each other. Your positivity, optimism, and belief matters and every day you must feed yourself in order to feed your teammates."

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## Commitment #3: Commit to Giving Your Best

After their day off and a few days of practice, Coach Richie noticed that the guys were making too many mistakes. Too many were not being consistent. Too many were not giving their best effort. As a coach, he knew there were times his team needed to be pulled up and times they needed a push. With a few days left before their first game, he believed that now was a time they needed a little push. Before practice he had the team gather in the meeting room.

"To work harder, you have to care more. If you care more, you will push through the soreness. If you care more, you will give your all even when you feel like you don't have your all. If you care more, you won't just go through the motions. If you care more, you will always give your best. And that's the next commitment I want you all to make this season."

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## The Roller Coaster

Coach Richie's words and commitments must have struck a chord, because during the first game his team outworked, out hustled, and outplayed their opponent and cruised to victory for their first win of the season. A season is like a roller coaster, with ups and downs, and when you're up you can't get too high on yourself. And when you're going down the roller coaster and feel like you're crashing, you can't jump off and escape. You just have to stay on the roller coaster and focus on your principles and commitments.

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## Commitment #4: Commit to Getting Better

After practice the guys took their seats in the meeting room and Coach Riche held up a newspaper. "Hey, big boys! Don't believe the press clippings. They will tell you that you're better than you are and worse than you are. Today means nothing".

Coach walked to the whiteboard and wrote down the Questions:

1. What went well?
2. What could we do better?

What did we learn that will make us better?

"This is going to help us hold each other accountable to our commitments and make sure each person is giving their best and working to get better. If you see it, reinforce it and recognize each other. If you don't see it, call it out and address it."

### Tough Love

The team lost two games in a row. The guys sat in the locker room exhausted, devastated, and defeated. They were now 5-4 and their season was on the brink. Coach Richie knew they were at a pivotal crossroad. They would either turn it around or the season would be another disaster. He knew the guys played their hearts out and after the game in the locker room he told them he was very proud of them. Their commitment to being their best and getting better was unmatched. He never had a team work so hard and give so much. But while he didn't say it in that moment, he knew the problem was that they challenged each other more than they loved each other. Every great team needs a combination of love and accountability. Tough love is essential, but love must come first.

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### Commitment #5: Commit to Connect

The guys walked into the team meeting room sad and somber, with their heads down and their hearts and bodies aching. Coach Richie pointed to their vision statement on the wall. "See that? It says, One Gritty Team That Competes Like Champions. You are definitely competing like champions individually. You are each being gritty in your play. But we are not being a gritty team together. You have individual grit but we don't have team grit because we are not one team. Team grit is all about connection."

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### The Safe Seat

Coach Amy placed a chair in the front of the room facing the rest of the team and called it the Safe Seat.

1. Who's your Hero?
2. What's a Hardship you faced that was a defining moment in your life?
3. What's a Highlight you are proud of?
4. What do you Hope for?
5. What's Hilarious? What makes you laugh? Could be a story or anything funny.

She had each guy sit in the Safe Seat one at a time and share their 5 Hs.

### Team Beats Talent

Coach Amy had never seen the 5 Hs go wrong. Every team she had ever shared it with became more connected, and this time and this team was no different. They walked into the room as disconnected individuals and walked out a connected team. In sharing themselves and their stories, a special spirit filled the room. The walls of pride, envy, and ego came crumbling down, and what was left was always there. It was love. In the weeks that followed, Coach Richie watched as this team became the most connected team he had ever coached.

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### Commitment #6: Commit to Each Other

As the players took their seats in the meeting room, Coach Amy smiled and said, "Okay, it's time for some difficult conversations." She handed out plain white paper with each person's name at the top on one side and sticky tape on the other side. She instructed the players to stick the paper on each other's backs so everyone had a sheet of paper on their back. She had them all come to the open space in the front of the room and asked seven teammates to stand side by side while she handed out markers to the rest of them. "Now, on the white paper on your teammates' backs, write a few words that represent what you believe is holding that teammate back from being their best and being a great teammate. After we've done the first seven, the next seven will line up and you'll write on their backs. When we're all done, we're going to have some difficult conversations." She then had one guy at a time come to the front of the room and take the paper off their back, sit in the Safe Seat, and read out loud what was written on the paper.

It was a defining moment in Tim's life, and he and his team would be forever transformed by this exercise and their own willingness to change, improve, sacrifice, and become better teammates.

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### Loss

With more ups and downs than ever this year, he and his staff were not surprised that they won their next game and lost the game after that. The win was special because they played so well together. They finally jelled on the field and played connected, committed, and as one. The loss was devastating because they were once again playing so well together until H went down with a severe knee injury that required a cart to take him off the field.

This team wasn't worried about losing. They were focused on their commitments and competing and preparing to win.

Coach said “We lost our focus and we lost the game. I’m not mad at all. LOSS stands for Learning Opportunity, Stay Strong, so I want us to take the lesson from this loss, and stay strong as we approach our last game of the regular season.”

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## I Am...

The next day at practice, a day before their final game, Coach Amy stood in the middle of the circle and looked at the team, including H, who was on crutches and awaiting surgery. His knee was too swollen to have surgery yet, and he loved his team too much not to be with them before the big game. “You are not the thoughts you think. You are the thoughts you believe,” said Coach Amy. “So think about what would happen if you said, ‘I am strong. I am powerful. I am a champion.’ I want each of you to come into the circle one at a time and say, ‘I am’ and then add another word. Speak life into who you are. Say it and become it!”

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## Stronger Together

This team wasn't worried about losing. They were focused on their commitments and competing and preparing to win. They didn't want their season to end and because they played with confidence, determination, unity, and selflessness, it didn't. They played their best game of the season and left no doubt who was the better team. They did it. They had made it to the postseason, and when they got to the locker room they danced like they had never danced before.

“I’m proud of you guys,” said Coach Richie. “Not because you won. I’m proud of you because of the team you have become.”

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## An Unexpected Fan

They received a ton of press and accolades from the media and their fans. While the guys were doing their best to ignore what the media was saying, their families and friends were reading and watching everything. Including estranged family members like Tim's father. Tim hadn't seen or talked

to him in years but he reached out to Tim and said he was coming to see him play in the quarterfinals game. Tim was a wreck leading up to the game. His teammates didn't know what was going on but they knew something was wrong.

During a team building session two days before the quarterfinals, Coach Amy asked the guys to share anything they were struggling with. Tim told the team about his father calling him and coming to the game. After the game Tim walked over to the stands to see his father, who had made his way onto the field. Tim wasn't in the mood to hug him or get into details of their past. But when his father said it was great to watch him play and that he was proud of him, Tim began to cry, gave him a hug, thanked him for coming, and said he had to go celebrate with the team.

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## Forever Teammates

Two days later the team walked into the stadium to play in the national championship expecting to win, and they played their best game of the season and competed like champions, but on this day they didn't win a championship. They gave their all and played beautifully together but their opponent was the better, more talented team who were also connected and committed.

“Trophies don't last,” Coach said. “They break. They get lost. They get thrown out. They lose their significance. In a few hundred years no one will care about whether you won a championship trophy. But the way you cared about each other and loved each other and played for each other, that's what lasts forever. It's the love that lasts forever, and that's why you all are forever teammates!”

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## The 6 Commitments

Tim thought about what he was like back then and how those times with his team and Coach Richie's fatherly influence transformed him as a man and leader. And he smiled thinking about how Coach Richie and his teammates like Vino were still impacting him now, years later. Coach Amy popped into Tim's head.

He remembered seeing her 10 years earlier at an alumni event, where she told him about workshops she did helping teams implement the 6 Commitments. He opened the contacts on his phone, found her cell number, and called her. They agreed to have her fly in to do a workshop with his leadership team the next week. Tim loved the plan. He had already experienced the impact the 6 Commitments had on his college team. If they had even half the impact on his company, he would be very happy.

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### Commitment Recognizes Commitment

Going through the 6 Commitments with his team and Coach Amy was like being in a time machine. With each commitment he reflected on the past and saw how it applied to his present team and situation.

“Commitment recognizes commitment,” said Coach Amy. “The more you commit, the more it will come back to you.” Tim marveled at how Coach Amy had mastered the commitments and was prepared for every issue and nuance that came up during her teaching, as she helped guide the decisions of how each person and the team would implement the commitments. The fact that Tim took ownership of his lack of commitment helped greatly, and his vulnerability helped the team become vulnerable.

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### The Funeral

Tim thought he had cried his last tear after telling his family that Coach Richie had passed away. But as soon as he saw his teammates, the tears started flowing once again. He hadn't seen many of them in a long time. Some he hadn't seen since they graduated. Life flies by when you begin your career, meet your spouse, have kids, start and grow a business, and raise a family.

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### The Power Inside You

Tim wanted his employees to become forever teammates, and he wanted to provide practical tips to create something tangible when dealing with such an ethereal idea as “forever.”

He made a video and shared it with everyone in the company, talking about the power of caring and creating your life and success from the inside out. He told them that being a forever teammate is possible in every moment by reminding yourself, “This matters. This meeting matters.

What I'm doing matters. This person matters. This mission matters. This team matters. This effort matters. This client matters. If it matters to you and you care about it, you will put this care into the person, the project, the meeting, the team, and the client. And the care you put into it will determine the quality of it.”

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### The 7th Commitment

Coach Amy had been teaching the 6 Commitments so long it felt strange to hear there was a 7th Commitment but she was open to getting better.

Tim went to the board and wrote:

The 7th Commitment: Commit to Valuing Each Other

Tim explained, “If you don't value each other and find value in your team members, then none of the other commitments work or make sense. You first have to value each other and value the team. If you do, you'll commit to giving your all to the team and commit to getting better together and commit to connecting with each other and commit to sacrificing for each other. If you value your team, you'll do all of it. But if you don't value each other, you won't do any of it.”

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### Forever Impact

Tim made a commitment to himself and Coach Richie that he wasn't just going to talk about being a forever teammate and leader. He was committed to doing it and was going to do all he could to create a forever impact and help others do the same. He looked at the championship ring and had an idea. He wanted to create a reminder for his teammates and team members at work that symbolized the 7 Commitments.

By following the seven commitments in this book, leaders are able to understand the balance between accountability and encouragement. Jon Gordon is able to take his own experiences in being coached and allow readers in on the secrets that worked for him. Whether it is in a professional or personal setting, commitment is essential in building a solid foundation for people. Even after adversity, people can be coached to be a major part of high-performing teams.



Jon Gordon is a 16x bestselling author and thought leader, renowned keynote speaker, and consultant who has worked with many of the top leaders and organizations around the world. Jon is a highly sought after global influencer who inspires millions of people each year with his books, talks, podcasts, and messages on positivity, teamwork, and leadership.

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