

Managing vs. Leading: How Do You Differentiate Between the Two?



Some say that you manage “things” and lead “people.” We think that everyone performs a number of roles in their job, and they include not only managing and leading but also coaching and technical/task oriented functions.

Here’s how we define them:

- Leadership: Taking yourself and others where they’ve never gone before, and would not go by themselves
- Management: Planning, organizing, controlling, and following-up
- Coaching: Helping others to achieve their desired goals and objectives
- Technician: Doing a job or task extremely well

Your title or position may change the amount of time you execute a particular role, but chances are you perform each of the four roles to some degree.

Let’s address leading versus managing in more detail.

Leadership tasks are softer, less tangible elements that are more difficult for management to influence. These include:

- Company culture; shared values
- Leadership style
- Staff, diversity, and opportunity
- Core competencies
- Inspiring, developing, and engaging staff

Management tasks are more tangible elements management can readily influence, like:

- Strategy
- Organizational charts

- Compensation and benefits
- Job descriptions
- Control processes
- IT systems

Soft skills matter. Great leaders get more from their people and recognize and acknowledge the beliefs, values, actions, feelings, and desires of those around them. They take the time to be aware of not only their own styles, preferences, and behaviors, but they recognize and leverage the strengths and differences that others bring to the table. Non-financial incentives (e.g., attention from leaders; praise/commendation from managers) can be equally, if not more, effective than financial incentives.¹

There are powerful benefits for firms considered world class (top 10%), which have high engagement levels and great leaders.² Their earnings per share are 3.9 times greater than same industry companies. When you compare high engagement firms (top 25%) to those ranked in the bottom 25%, productivity is 18% greater, customer satisfaction is rated 12% higher, and profitability is up 16%, with staff turnover 25-49% lower.

Leading requires having followers. In order to have followers, a common vision, mission, and clearly defined and shared goals must be in existence in order for there to be a destination that is aspired to be reached.

Open lines of communication are critical, as are acknowledging contributions and openly discussing areas for improvement. Finger pointing is unacceptable! This does not mean there won't be conflict, differing opinions, or the need to hold one-self and others accountable. Feedback is an absolute "must" and needs to be provided in an honoring, respectful, and well intended way.

To skillfully lead, there must be the capacity to build trust and maximize collective strengths; successes and failures are discussed, conflict is encouraged (and managed so it remains healthy), and recognition is consistent and aligns with goal attainment.

Have you ever doubted your ability to lead or questioned if you were considered a leader? In reality EVERYONE is a leader. We all influence others by our actions, behaviors, and personality. Sometimes, we even unknowingly lead (and are viewed by others as a leader). Why?

- We keep confidences
- We treat others respectfully
- We stay true to our values and principles
- We are good listeners
- We appreciate differences
- We aren't judgmental
- We don't gossip
- We deliver what we say we will
- We are aware of what is happening around us
- We are consistent
- We don't fear change, and
- We promote these behaviors throughout the workplace, and our life

Being a strong leader requires great self awareness, an assessment of what one wants to accomplish, and developing strategies to reach that accomplishment.

Leading is not an event but rather a process which takes time, care, and attention. Are you aware of how many individuals (personally and professionally) you inspire and influence?

Let's not leave out the need to **manage**. How successful would any organization be if they lacked the resources that possessed the necessary skills to plan, organize, control, and understood the need for follow-up?

Processes need to be managed, documented, and repeatable. They must also be assessed. Are goals being achieved? What's working well? What could change? What worked well in the past may need to be "re-engineered" to save costs and increase benefits. This requires change, and change must be managed (especially since with change there is resistance).

Given the times, we need to expect that the need for change will occur at a rapid pace which brings discomfort and uncertainty. This too must be managed. We need to prepare ourselves and others, and we need to understand and clearly communicate all changes and their associated impacts.

Changing roles and responsibilities need to be managed along with the challenges organizations and teams are facing. During times of uncertainty, there is an increased need for awareness; team synergy may need to be revitalized and top performers may need to be re-skilled. This all must be managed!

By Michael Kublin and Jan Mayer-Rodriguez

Do you think you spend more time managing or leading? Both roles are essential to be successful. Take the time to assess where you spend the majority of your time, then consider if you could be even more successful if you changed the amount of time you invested in each category.

¹ McKinsey, June 2009 survey of 1047 executives, managers, and employees

² Gallup, Inc., Data drawn from 152 organizations

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