

Leader or Manager: Which Should I Be?

By Bart Bolton, Facilitator, Lifetime Learning

Note: Bart originally wrote this white paper a few years ago for The Advisory Council (TAC), an audience of IT managers. Many of the concepts are timeless and can be applied equally to all types of managers of both virtual and collocated teams.

SmartSummary

- Your personal development plan should address both leadership and management capabilities and styles.
- An in-depth and personal assessment of your leadership and management capabilities is the starting point.
- Understanding the differences between Leadership and Management is required for success.

SmartAdvice

Ask any consultant that question and the answer most likely would be “it depends”. The best answer is “both”. To be truly successful in your career, you need to know which role, leader or manager, to play at what time and under what circumstances. The roles are very different as we will explore but knowing which one is “best” for you begins with knowing who you really are and what you are really good at.

A friend of mine, Darwin John, describes the personal discovery we all must do as the interlocking of three circles. The first circle is How We See Ourselves, the second is How Others See Us, and the third is Who We Want to Be. The amount of overlap is a function of just how well we know ourselves with the ideal being a total overlap. His model is a good starting point in a self-assessment to understand who you are. Understanding your Myers-Briggs (MBTI) or some other profiling tool would also be helpful. As a third step, strive over time to answer the following questions:

1. What are the driving forces in my life that have made me who I am today?
2. In what do I really believe?
3. What are my personal values that I would not compromise?
4. What are my primary talents (not skills)?
5. Who are my role models and why?

Today’s workplace and environment are placing different demands on those who lead and manage our organizations. The pressures are intense, the priorities are seemingly in a state of flux, and the amount of knowledge expands at an unprecedented rate. Old management models don’t work in this world of globalization. Flatter organizations mean more direct reports and less time to spend with each of them. Matrix organizations compound the relationships and force you to get work done through

others. Micro-managing, issuing ultimatums, and using threats and fear (otherwise known as command-and-control) are really not effective. Developing a management or leadership style in that model won't prove to result in a successful career.

Management vs. Leadership

It has been said that Leadership is the highest form of Management. Organizations that are "all management" usually develop insatiable bureaucracy. Those that are "all leadership" will most likely result in anarchy. We need to understand the difference in order to answer whether you should be a leader or a manager. John Kotter has made the simplest distinction in his book, A Force for Change. At a summary level, he sees it as:

Management –

- Planning & Budgeting
- Organizing & Staffing
- Controlling & Problem Solving

Leadership –

- Establishing Direction
- Aligning People
- Motivating & Inspiring

Can you imagine any organization being effective without a mix of all six items above? You certainly need all of them for effective project management. Can you be successful in your career in an organization without knowing or doing all of them as the situation requires?

Let's look at a set of other differences or comparisons between Management and Leadership. Try to assess which ones represent your modus operandi. How do they address the three circles of your personal discovery?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Management</u>	<u>Leadership</u>
Thinking Process	Brain (logic) Things Inward focus Change is transitional In the box	Heart (intuition) People Outward focus Change is permanent Out of the box

Direction Setting	Plan Map Bottomline Short-range view Sees trees	Vision Compass Topline Long-range view Sees forest
Employee Relations	Control Subordinates Instructs Pushes (commands) Directs & Coordinates	Empower Followers Learns Pulls (motivates) Trusts & Develops
Modus Operandi	Efficiency (do things right) Asks "How" and "When" Copes with complexity Manages within a paradigm Manages change Administers Analyzes	Effectiveness (do right things) Asks "What" and "Why" Tolerates ambiguity Leads between paradigms Produces change Inspires Creates
Methods & Tools	Mission Cost Benefit Analysis Policies & Procedures Depends on process and system Budgets Uses leverage	Vision Results Principles & Values Depends on people and ideas Relationships Builds complementary teams

Concluding Suggestions

One more question to ask yourself: whom do you make happy first – Shareholders, Customers or Employees? Which would a Manager do? Which would a Leader do? What are the priorities as you see them? Without customers, you don't have a business, without shareholders you don't have the financial backing, and without employees, you can't deliver products and/or services. So, how do you choose?

Answering the question of whether you should be a Manager or a Leader is not a simple task. You need to develop a personal style that can accommodate both, and need to know when to draw upon which role. I recommend you do a self-assessment and have a series of discussions with your mentor and others whom you trust and who know you well. Learn and understand the differences of the two roles and then determine the level of overlap of your own three circles. Your career development will then have a basis upon which you can plan. Your answer will then be forthcoming.