The Synergy
of Leadership and Management

Leadership is not management, nor is a good leader automatically a good manager. Leadership skills and managerial skills are two distinctly different but complementary capabilities. In a turbulent business environment, success on both the individual and organizational levels depends on the ability of leaders to manage and managers to lead.

Leadership Skills

Kouzes and Posner's seminal book, *The Leadership Challenge* (2003, 3rd edition), identifies five leadership practices that characterize the thousands of leaders that were interviewed in preparation of their book. Although initially appearing to be common sense, subjective anecdotal experience reveals that these practices are not so common in the modern business environment.

These 5 leadership practices are:

- Model the way (by walking the talk and setting the example for not only on WHAT employees should be focusing, but also HOW they should carry out their duties and responsibilities).
- Inspire a shared vision (by envisioning a future of vitality and creativity that appeals to the desires of not only the marketplace, but also the employees who must necessarily act and contribute to the realization of that vision).
- Challenge the process (by refusing to accept the status quo and constantly searching for ways to change, grow, and improve with the courage and understanding that, although failure may result, lemonade can and will be made from the lemons).
- Enable others to act (by achieving accomplishments through collaboration rather than command and fostering commitment rather than robotic, uninspired compliance or under-achievement).
- Encourage the heart (by recognizing, appreciating, and celebrating the contributions of employees even if their accomplishments are part of their job description).

Although all five practices are considered to be soft skills, the failure to utilize these practices in leading the employees of your organization yields bottom-line results in decreased productivity, increased customer complaints, high turnover, recruitment and retention difficulties, a reactive (rather than proactive) approach to the market, and limited (or non-existent) innovation.

What Leadership Is and Isn't

Leadership is not about the touchy-feely aspects of human interaction, while management focuses on the serious issues of business. Jack Welch (former CEO of General Electric) is universally recognized for his outstanding leadership skills, but would never be considered as incapable in addressing the serious

issues plaguing modern business. Welch recognized that to achieve organizational greatness (and its corresponding high stock value and market share) requires employee commitment, and employees (or any individual) will not commit unless they have emotionally bought into achieving the outcome. Change or die became a credo at GE and catapulted the company and its leading executive into greatness – not passable performance, but truly great, transformational performance.

But what is a leader? And how is a leader different from a manager?

Leaders focus on the long-term; managers focus on the short-term. Leaders keep their eye on the horizon, while managers keep their eye on the bottom-line. Leaders will tolerate failure or missteps as long as the direction is toward the goal AND the individual and organization learn from the failure. Failure, therefore, is viewed as an opportunity to learn.

Leaders reinforce the values of the organization in employees...managers direct and control employee actions. Because all actions are based on internal (and often unexpressed) motivations, which are in turn based on value systems, leaders recognize that achieving employee buy-in to the underlying values, which direct organizational activities, is a short cut to achieving success. In contrast, managers focus exclusively on employee actions and behaviors with little or no interest in the reasons behind those actions.

Leaders are unafraid of appearing vulnerable or admitting that they do not have all the answers; managers keep an emotional distance and rarely admit ignorance. Leaders listen to others, while managers talk AT others. Leaders embrace diversity, while managers encourage conformity. Leaders inspire the heart, while managers focus exclusively on the mind.

Leaders courageously embrace change; managers clench tightly to preserve the status quo. In a 24/7 world, speed in addressing a constantly changing market requires letting go of past beliefs and strategies even if those beliefs and strategies led to success in the past; under different circumstances (perhaps those facing the organization today), past beliefs and strategies can be the primary causes of current failures by not adapting to changing conditions and realities.

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Leaders inspire a manager's command. Leaders create emotional bonds with employees that inspire them to give 110% because their ideas are sought, their efforts are appreciated, and their accomplishments are recognized. Management without leadership creates compliance and effort significantly below even 100%; no one wants to be told (directly or through implication) that their ideas are irrelevant, their efforts are expected, and/or their accomplishments are minimalized.

Leadership, therefore, is crucial in creating exceptional performance. The requisite skills are distinctly different from those found in pure management. However, the skills of leadership and management are not mutually exclusive; success will not be achieved if an individual in a position of authority relies exclusively on one skill set. Focusing exclusively on a distant vision without proper handling of current challenges will derail the organization's ability to achieve that goal, but without the goal, the threat of aimless wandering is intensified. Values determine behavior, but values are unseen, objective performance evaluations must necessarily rely on behaviors in addition to expressed values. An authority figure who is ignorant of the field or industry lacks expert power in times of crisis, employees will look to those in authority for answers. A turbulent, changing business environment requires adaptability and flexibility, but change for change's sake leads to chaos because humans have an innate need not only for growth/change, but also for stability. Inspirational leadership may focus on either the people or the task, but command-and-control management excludes the human component entirely.

Leadership and management skills, therefore, are complementary. Leadership combined with management creates synergy. Leadership and management engage the hearts and minds of employees and constituents. Success in the 21st century requires not only leaders who can manage, but managers who can lead.

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