

## Leadership and Management: do we need one more than the other?

Is there a difference between management and leadership? Differing opinions abound, though most experts do indeed distinguish between the two. This brief article examines the key characteristics associated with effective management and leadership behavior in the workplace and makes a case for the necessity of both skill sets, though in varying degrees at times, for organizational excellence.

### Synonymous?

As mentioned above, some experts think of leadership and management as synonymous terms, using them interchangeably when discussing the subject. Others view these terms as very different indeed – almost as extreme opposites, with very little overlap. A third position is one that seems most sensible to us – that while differences between leadership and management exist, perhaps there are times when the two can and do overlap and that we often need both to achieve excellence.

### Doing the right thing vs. doing things right

An old and well-known proverb states that leadership is, “*doing the right thing*,” while management is “*doing things right*.” While an obvious overgeneralization, this distinction presents a useful starting place for thoughtful consideration of the similarities and differences between effective management and leadership behavior. Review of the literature lead to development of the table below which outlines some of the major attempts to describe the two fields in the simplest of terms:

Leadership focus:	Management focus:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment</li> <li>• Vision/Direction</li> <li>• Big picture/overview</li> <li>• Strategic/Medium to Long-term</li> <li>• Has the “eye” on the horizon</li> <li>• Change</li> <li>• Challenges the status quo</li> <li>• Informal</li> <li>• Effectiveness</li> <li>• Styles /Approach</li> <li>• Releasing potential</li> <li>• Mainly use the power of Influence</li> <li>• Facilitates decisions</li> <li>• Investigates reality</li> <li>• Asks “what” and “why”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization</li> <li>• Process/Control</li> <li>• Little picture/detail</li> <li>• Tactical/Short to medium-term</li> <li>• Has the “eye” on the bottom line</li> <li>• Stability</li> <li>• Accepts the status quo</li> <li>• Formal</li> <li>• Efficiency</li> <li>• Skills</li> <li>• Using existing ability</li> <li>• Mainly use the power of Authority</li> <li>• Makes decisions</li> <li>• Accepts reality</li> <li>• Asks “how” and “when”</li> </ul>

**Which is best?**

By laying out the two functions side-by-side like this some clarity about the terms starts to emerge. Exclusion of any skill or ability can negatively impact success, and so the game becomes more about drawing on both skill sets over time, in differing proportion. Hence, we can see that both leadership and management are important. But can we now determine in what proportion, in most circumstances?

**Moving up the organizational ladder**

Another factor to consider is that of positional responsibility within the organization. Classic theory tells us that management (tactical skills) is more critical to success at lower and mid-levels of management while leadership (strategic abilities) is used more often at senior or upper management levels. While this simple differentiation presents another gross generalization, it can start us thinking about how individual roles might take on a given emphasis in one direction or another.

**Mixing and matching**

Another way to look at split and degree of emphasis is to put leadership and management into a classic, four-quadrant relationship graph. In this way one can examine the resulting interaction, or even “style” that occurs as a result of the expression of high and low levels of each variable. The graph below depicts leadership on the “y” axis, and management is shown on the “x” axis.

<b>Strong Leadership but Weak Management</b>	<b>Strong Leadership and Strong Management</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visions detached from reality</li> <li>• Alignment without organisation</li> <li>• Multiple projects culture slowly emerges</li> <li>• Strategies lack support and formal planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspirational visions and strategies</li> <li>• Widespread organisational alignment</li> <li>• Integrated planning and control of resources</li> <li>• Full employee empowerment and commitment</li> </ul>
<b>Weak Leadership and Weak Management</b>	<b>Strong Management but Weak Leadership</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No vision or strategies</li> <li>• Poor planning and resource allocation</li> <li>• Out of control processes</li> <li>• Employee disaffection and frustration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processes grow more unwieldy and/or bureaucratic</li> <li>• Over-specialisation/standardization</li> <li>• More policies and procedures evolve</li> <li>• Controls stifle creativity/innovation</li> </ul>

**High / High is Optimal**

It is now quite clear that, in most cases, both strong leadership and strong management are desirable, and that one is not necessarily more important than the other. Given this conclusion, the focus shifts to evaluation of the question of whether we have enough good management behavior, and enough good leadership behavior in order to thrive and move ahead.

### How much is good enough?

Assuming that the organization is not occupying the bottom left corner of the previous relationship grid, if we need to add more leadership then the emphasis will be on greater use of the communication process (in both directions), pulling people together and creating more widespread team commitment (among other things). If, on the other hand, we need to add more management, then the emphasis will be on greater standardization or specialization, the establishment of more formal structures and greater control of systems (among other things).

### Summing up

Ultimately, organizational success rests on a healthy balance of leadership and management and we need to learn how to make sure we have enough of each and in the right proportion for the circumstances.

To learn more about this topic, visit our [Leadership and Management Forum](#) at the [ReadytoManage Webstore](#).

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