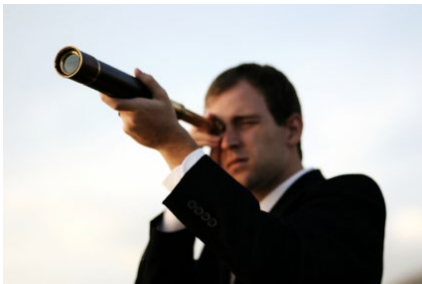


Leadership Barometer 193 Management Versus Leadership

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The contrast of management versus leadership is a fascinating area. Peter Drucker once said, “Managers do things right; leaders do the right things.” He packed a lot of horse sense into that compact sentence.

In this article, I will expand on the point. There are several observations from my readings and my own background. Let’s start by contrasting the mindset of a pure manager and that of a pure leader.

Contrasting management versus leadership

A manager’s mindset is to try to reach perfection. The manager wants to be a **stabilizing** force. Everything in the organization should work as it was designed. People report to work on time and are ready to produce. The process is well-maintained and produces error-free product. People get paid on time. The ideal situation for a manager is that every person and process is cloned to be the same every time. A manager’s focus is on running the process today. The idea is to accomplish the **mission** of the organization now.

The Leader’s world is a very different place. This individual often acts as a destabilizing force. Focus is on the potential of the organization. The leader is all about the **vision** of the organization in the future. A typical thought pattern looks for potential and asks, “What could we become?”

In reality, we focus on both dimensions at different times

The truth is that there are no perfect managers or perfect leaders. Most individuals provide the organization with shaping in both areas. In my classes, I ask individuals to picture where on the continuum between extremes they are most comfortable.

If your natural tendency is toward leadership and you are stuck grinding out the product every day, you will suffer. Likewise, if you enjoy tweaking a process to make it perfect, you may be unhappy as a leader.

Recognize that any one individual cannot perform exclusively on both dimensions every day. The world requires that a mixture of the characteristics is in play depending on circumstances.

Conclusion

In practice, many successful organizations have both effective managers and strong leaders. Managers ensure that day-to-day operations run smoothly, while leaders set the direction and vision for the organization. By working together, managers and leaders can achieve the right balance of efficiency and effectiveness. Having both philosophies in play ensures that the organization is both productive and adaptable to changing circumstances.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, and *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations.