

# Manager to Leader

In today's Business world, being an effective manager or leader is more important than it has ever been. With the huge advances in technology together with the shift towards flexible and remote working, they cannot simply "manage" the team but must also be inspiring and empowering in order to drive autonomy and self-motivation in people.



## Is there a difference between a Manager and a Leader?

Businesses thrive and achieve where employees feel that they have made a difference and this happens when there is a strong and effective leadership style. So what are the differences between being a Manager and being a Leader?

## Let's look at a few typical perspectives on this question and perhaps critique these common responses:

- Managers are focussed on "getting the job done". They are in charge of a team and will be the decision maker, delegating tasks and using tried and tested processes in order to achieve a set outcome. Whilst, in many cases, this approach does lead to achievement of a goal, it is often detrimental to the overall team morale. A leader, however, will build relationships within their team, recognising individual talents and guiding and encouraging their employees to follow in their footsteps and strive for better.
- A Manager will be in charge of the project and will have a rigid plan, control over tasks and decision making. A leader however, will coach, encourage and inspire their team and strive to create an environment of trust, laying the foundations for employees to step up, make decisions, take risks and accomplish their goals collaboratively.

- Managers can be rigid in their outlook as they stick to maintaining the "status quo". In contrast, an effective leader will be a "change agent", embracing new ideas and innovation and encouraging likeminded thinking within their teams. They will seek to empower their employees and support them in taking risks even if there is a possibility of failure – stepping outside of the "norm" can often lead to more successful path. As Simon Sinek says:

*"The courage of leadership is giving others the chance to succeed even though you bear the responsibility for getting things done".*

Can leadership and management really be split into such binary positions? Experience and working with many leaders and managers would suggest not. You could argue as Ashira Prossack does that, "Anyone in a management or supervisory role is a leader but not everyone in those positions exhibits true leadership" (Forbes Aug 2018).



## Perhaps leadership and management are defined by certain attributes and behaviours?

Let us again explore some common responses in more depth. It is often said that leaders need to demonstrate the qualities below amongst others, but is it also true that managers should exhibit these traits to be effective and have an impact?

### Competence:



In order to be an effective leader, a person must firstly be competent within their field and gain respect from their team for being both a decision maker and also being open and adaptable to change. A leader must have a strong knowledge of, not only their own department, but also the business as a whole and the industry in which it functions. They will lead by example with their knowledge and understanding of the business whilst also being open to other opinions and challenges. No-one expects a leader to know all the answers. A good leader will understand their own strengths and weaknesses and know when to rely on the knowledge and expertise of other team members. Competence is not only about professional knowledge of a business but also about engendering confidence, trust and respect from the others.

### Enthusiasm and Belief:



Belief in the business and its products and services is an essential quality for a strong leader. Such enthusiasm and passion is contagious within a team and the energy that a leader has for the business goals and achievements

encourages others in the group to follow. An enthusiastic leader must communicate their passion to their employees through being vocal and actively involved and engaged with the team and inspire them to be excited about the outcome of their decisions.

### Empowerment:



We have all heard the phrase "there is no "I" in team". A successful leader will recognise this and build a successful team, understanding the qualities of the group as a whole and the individual talents within it. They will encourage team members to act autonomously, be empowered to make their own decisions, question and disagree with the "status quo" and put forward alternative solutions. In fact, in the "safe haven" that is provided by their leader, they will be positively encouraged and rewarded for suggesting changes and challenging the "norm". Team collaboration is essential for an effective leader and the group as a whole. Employees who are empowered to make decisions and feel listened to are more likely to "buy in" to the business, work more efficiently and feel valued with the backing of a supportive leader. As Richard Branson said:

*"Employees want to know...am I being listened to or am I a cog in the wheel? People really need to feel wanted".*

### Flexibility:



Leadership is about understanding when the different roles are required and being agile and flexible in the approach. Bill Gates said "Success today requires the agility and drive to constantly rethink, reinvigorate, react and reinvent" At times, it may be necessary to be a manager, lead from the front, be the decision maker and be responsible for the team as a whole. At other times, there may be the need to work on an equal level with the team, standing "shoulder to shoulder" with the group and making collaborative decisions or take on the role of a coach or mentor to individual members of the

team. Flexible leaders can modify their approach in response to changes in circumstances both internally and externally and adapt their business plans to incorporate new ideas and considerations whilst still being on track to achieving their goals.

### Integrity/Humility:



Effective leadership is about knowing when to stand back and encourage risk, talent and new ideas from the team and having the integrity and humility to share in both the successes and failures that come from them. It is about being humble, "being human", acknowledging their own mistakes openly and learning from them. Leaders with humility seek honest feedback from their team and are visibly self-reflective rather than defensive in their response. In turn, they will regularly feedback to their employees, rewarding innovation despite the outcome. A good leader will always be open to learning and accepts that they are not the "fountain of all knowledge". Adrian Lock from Roffey Park sums this up when he said:

*"Humble leaders are those who have an accurate perception of their strengths and their weaknesses and know their need of others."*

### Communication:



Effective communication is a vital component of a successful and forward-thinking team. A leader will be able to show flexibility within their communication styles and be competent in using a particular method in any given situation. Communication skills are both reactive and proactive and leaders must be proficient in their use. A strong leader will know when to listen, advise, motivate, teach, coach and direct at different times in order to instil trust and confidence within the team. The best communicators are great listeners and are adept at reading the mood of the team, honing in on the values, beliefs, concerns and dynamics of the group and adjusting the communication style accordingly. Leaders must communicate effectively across gender, culture and personality, overcoming bias and personal opinions to meet

the needs and expectations of those they are trying to reach. Mike Myatt (Forbes) wrote

*"...keep in mind that communication is not about you, your opinions, your positions or your circumstances. It's about helping others by meeting their needs, understanding their concerns, and adding value to their world".*

The best communicators are open minded, empathetic, reflective, knowledgeable and adaptable and instil trust, humility and respect within their team.

### Trust and Respect:



Trust and respect go hand in hand in building a successful team.

*"Building respect between you and others is a key differentiator between you and other leaders. Build your reputation by following through on promises, supporting other's successes, displaying emotional regulation and building relationships that are mutually respectful".* (Louis Carter – Forbes Nov 2018).

An effective leader should not micromanage as it makes their employees feel mistrusted. Instead, they must understand when to get involved and when to stand back and allow team members to make decisions and take risks. A leader who believes that success comes from the team and builds relationships through respect and trust will be rewarded with the same in return.

I would imagine that many managers would recognise themselves and identify with the above qualities and perhaps more importantly many people could attribute these traits to their own managers past and present. So, what then is the difference? Is there a difference? Is it just a 'title' thing?

Let's look at some examples of good leadership and ask ourselves if success would have been achieved to the same degree if effective management was not a key component.



## Examples of Businesses that have Inspirational Leadership

Many businesses have excelled in creating inspiring leaders who in turn, innovate and empower an enthusiastic and passionate workforce. These businesses then become sought after places to be employed and have regularly been cited as the "best places to work". A few examples of these are below:

### The Hilton Hotel Chain:

Hilton topped the Fortune "Great Place to Work" list again in 2019 with 96% of employees feeling valued, proud and invested in within the Company. Leaders have worked hard to instil a sense of trust, loyalty and empowerment throughout the Hilton brand which helped to earn its title.

### American Express:

Employees ranked American Express one of the best places to work due to its trust in leadership, fairness and being an inclusive workplace where teams were encouraged to become decision makers and "make a difference". This initiative has been successful in instilling trust and respect across the Company.

### Starbucks:

Starbucks has been known for some time for its excellent treatment of employees and its humility. In 1997, CEO Howard Schultz personally visited the families of three employees who had been shot and killed during a burglary at their Washington store and spent time with other team members.

### Anglian Water:

In the UK, Anglian Water won the 2019 Best Places to Work list. A Company that is inclusive and encourages innovation and shared passion and enthusiasm, one employee review states:

*"the workforce is clearly proud, passionate and really cares about the work they do which results in a really positive culture and working environment".*

### Microsoft:

CEO Satya Nadella states that all great leaders must be flexible and adaptable in response to change and should provide clarity in the face of adversity and chaos and gain the trust and respect of their team. Microsoft is considered a great place to work as leaders provide this security together with the contagious energy, passion and enthusiasm to reach a shared goal.

Once again strong management styles can be gleaned from all of these examples. Is it more about style then? Tannenbaum and Schmidt and Kenneth Blanchard and Paul Hersey amongst others would agree. They have all shared their insights of the varying styles leaders and managers can use to maximise effectiveness with different people in different situations and with different tasks.

So perhaps we are left with the reality that it is a personal notion. Are you seen as a manager or leader? Do you feel like a manager or leader? Should we just be both?



## A Consultant's Perspective

For me a good way to consider this subject is to ask two questions:

- 1) What might be the consequences for staff if the hierarchy showed great leadership skills and poor management skills?
- 2) What might be the consequences for staff if the hierarchy showed great management skills and poor leadership skills?

Unless the individuals that sit lower in the hierarchy are autonomous and self-motivated, I would suggest that both would lead to some concerning dynamics and poor results. Personally from my own experience and discussions regarding this subject it comes down to flexibility. If we want to manage successfully we must lead people and tasks and if we want to lead successfully we must manage people and tasks. It is true to say that there are many differences between senior leadership and management and more junior roles within both areas. There are perhaps less differentiators between leadership and management themselves. The task in hand for all of us is to identify our strengths and areas for development across both leadership and management if we are to maximise our effectiveness. We must strive to become well rounded leaders and managers as I believe that this is what is required from us in order to deliver and grow.