

Born to Lead or Made to Manage – We Need Both

By Allen J. Huth

In 25 years of working with politicians, big business corporate bureaucrats, small business owners, and entrepreneurs, I have never heard anyone say, “He’s a born manager.” Yet, long before working with leaders and managers, I was on elementary school playgrounds playing “follow the leader.”

Leaders and managers—the words are often used interchangeably—but they are different. Business schools are churning out MBAs, and bookstores and libraries are filled with management books, yet no one says, “There’s a shortage of management around here!” Recently, I saw a business card that said, “Making managers into leaders.” Why do that? If your organization had only leaders, would it be effective? Who would make sure the work got done?

HOW TO TELL

How does a leader know she is leading? Does she look over her shoulder to see if people are following? My one-word definition of a leader is “followers.” Leadership is not a position at the top of an organization. Just because she has the position does not mean she is leading. I have heard it said, “I’ll do what you say, but I won’t follow you anywhere.”

How does a manager know he is managing? The short definition of a manager is getting results through other people. If he is getting the job done by himself, he is a producer, not a manager.

Organizations need both leaders and managers, one is not better than the other. In working with clients recently, one CEO admitted he had too many leaders on his executive team and not enough managers. He said, “that’s why stuff isn’t getting done.” Another president realized she had too many managers on her team and not enough leaders. We don’t want one without the other. We know we need both, but what are the differences?

Below are the key differences between the two. For the fun of it, decide whether you are a leader or a manager, but you must choose one or the other, not both.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LEADERS AND MANAGERS

LEADERS

- Have willing followers
- Use influence
- The right to lead is earned from followers
- Ask (cannot use coercion)
- Have personal power
- Intend to make changes

MANAGERS

- Get results through other people
- Must have authority
- The right to manage is granted by ownership
- Tell (must be able to use coercion)
- Have position power
- Produce goods and services

Inspire followers with their vision
schedules, etc.)

Others may feel they are working with
leaders

Leaders are born

Coordinate activities of others (staffing,
schedules, etc.)

Others may feel they are working for
managers

Managers are made

Can a manager be very effective with the qualities listed above? There are many managers who get results through others using only the above list. The characteristics do not need to be negatively imposed; but a manager must have the right and power to get the job done. Would it be nice to also have some qualities from the leadership side? Sure, and most managers demonstrate some; but they do not need them to be effective.

Leaders cannot impose their vision on anyone or force anyone to follow them. At any time, a follower can walk away and follow a different leader, or simply stop following the leader with heart and soul and just do what it takes to get by.

There are informal leaders in every organization. They have no position power, no authority, no title; but they have influence, personal power, and followers. Leadership is not a title or a position; it is the earned right to lead, positively or negatively, by those who follow.

Think back about people you have enjoyed working with. Were they leaders or managers? Hopefully you have experienced, and enjoyed, both. Recognizing the differences, what are you? Whatever you are, be the best manager or leader you can be. Alleluia! There is a difference.

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