

Leadership vs. Management III

In the never-ending discussions about the differences between management and leadership, questions like these always arise, "How many managers do we need and how many leaders do we need?" "Aren't leadership attributes much more valuable than management attributes?" "Aren't managers easy to find, and aren't leaders very difficult to find?" (Insert your favorite management/leadership questions here.)

Two weeks ago, Leadership vs. Management I, the article dealt with the fundamental attributes of the role of manager versus the role of leader. Last week, Leadership vs. Management II, the article dealt with management's focus on task and decision making based on data and with leadership's focus on relationship and decision making based on intuition. This week's article deals with the general perception of the two roles.

Coincidentally, with a resurgence of teams during the '90s, there was an accompanying focus on leadership and leadership development. Leadership was portrayed as desirable at the expense of management. The traditional role of management was denigrated relative to the elevated stature of leader. While much of the literature focused on the intuition, relationship management, and visionary aspects of leadership, the more mundane task of implementation was left to management. As Tom Peters, contemporary management guru and author, put it so well In a Fast Company magazine article, "LEADERSHIP became sooooo coool in the 1990s. Crank out THE VISION. Harangue the troops. Stand tall in the saddle. Management? That was for wusses, wimps, and dead-enders."

This ethereal image of leadership portrayed an incomplete picture. The gaping hole was created by the void of execution. The emphasis had become so focused on "leading" it obscured the critical element of "doing." Leadership and management are not discrete disciplines assigned to people in the organization using a mathematical model. They are an integrated set of skills required by everyone in the organization. Specifically there are roles (jobs) with the titles, supervisor, manager, leader, executive, in every organization that have accompanying criteria that measure how well individuals perform these responsibilities.

Larry Bossidy, noted company turnaround executive, in his recent book "Leadership Pipeline," reiterates that execution is "the missing link between aspirations and results." Bossidy argues that the biggest obstacle in business today is the absence of execution. Bossidy very clearly states that execution is a discipline that leaders must learn.

SUMMARY: Tom Peters' Peter Principle: "Leaders are cool. Managers are cool too."

MAKING PROGRESS, MANAGING CHANGE

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