

## From a manager to a leader

# Crossing the great divide

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**The role of a leader is the most critical element of success in an organisation's transition. Managers and leaders should pay more attention to self-management and self-monitoring during organisational transitions. But, what differentiates a manager from a leader is that a leader must be willing to lead his people, define what is, what will be, and make the vision a reality. Read on for more...**

**Y**ou are a fantastic manager, and find yourself ready to take on more responsibilities. You sight this great opportunity. You read the advertisement and know it in your heart of hearts that you are the most eligible candidate for the job. Apart from having many important accomplishments to your credit, you have the requisite skills and experience in managing teams, even some that span across towns as well as countries. Being quite sure of your competence in planning and executing projects, you send in your resume, thinking that you are perfect for the job!

However, you do not even hear back from them. Or may be, you even attended the interview, but hear no further. What did they miss in you? Or, what did you miss? Many people have come across this

predicament. In such a scenario, the answer lies in not having the requisite leadership attributes that the prospective employer was looking for. You get frustrated as you thought that you were capable of handling the job. You also wonder why they could not figure out your leadership qualities. This is when you start thinking about communicating your leadership abilities more clearly.

It need not always be a new job. It could be an in-house opening, a new project, internal expansion, etc. In all these cases, your leadership competence should be better than the rest. Many professionals struggle in the transition from management to leadership. You think you have the capabilities, but you have not changed the perception of others. Most people are assigned to be leaders without proper assessment of their competence. This causes the organisation to suffer in the long run. Managers, who remember good leaders with envy, lack in many of the vital leadership qualities such as acceptance, appreciation and recognition.

Most people ask: what is it that makes a leader? Is it style, behaviour or character? Why do others perceive someone as a leader? And, what is it that makes a good manager. A good manager is one who inspires you to perform and excel. He cares about what you do and how you do it. He is the one everyone wants to work with or for, as he makes the group work as a team, and this team exceeds all expectations. Working in such a team is both fun and challenging. No doubt you work hard, but you also get the results.

### **Leader vs manager**

Certain quality aspects that a manager possesses when compared to a leader could generally lead you to think: "Is not a manager also a leader? Are these not leadership qualities? What then keeps a great manager from being a potential leader?" It is true that leaders have many qualities or traits of a competent manager, as they too inspire and motivate. But a leader takes it all a step further. Leaders exude enthusiasm. This

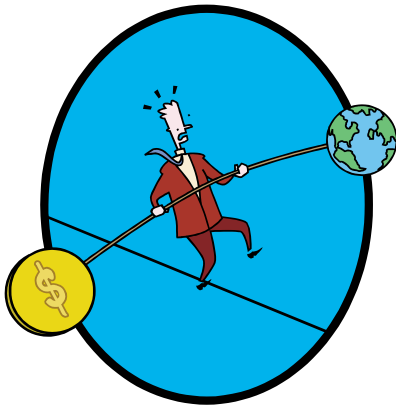


enthusiasm energises and attracts others and brings visions to life. Leaders are optimistic and articulate when talking about their dreams, plans, hopes and successes. They not only believe in what they are saying but also demonstrate their personal convictions through their behaviour. This gives them the confidence to make new judgement calls and sell ideas that contradict the status quo. This is what inspires others to follow the leaders down a difficult road while also keeping up the morale of the group. Leadership is not about just getting a bigger pay-cheque or a higher position. In reality, it is a whole different perspective.

Now introspect and ask yourself whether you have what it takes to be. Ask yourself: "What is my personal agenda? What do I want to prove? What mission in life obsesses me? What is my burning passion?" The answers you get will help you decide if leadership is the path for you.

### **Crossing the divide**

If you are missing out on leadership opportunities simply because people do not think of you as leadership material, then, examine your behaviour and change yourself to give a clearer demonstration of your leadership capabilities. You are judged more by what you do and less by



what you say. Taking these judgements into consideration, others conclude whether you are a great manager or a great manager with leadership potential. Although leadership qualities in a broader perspective, ethically, are the same, it is different in moderation when applied to different areas such as governance of a state or a nation, social leadership in a society, in a family, or in running a business enterprise. Your behaviour also influences other people's perception whether it is managing a business or working in an organisation. Some of these include:

**In a meeting:** Since meetings are a common occurrence, you sometimes tend to forget that your behaviour plays a significant role in how you are perceived, by those who have the potential to advance you. Which then are the typical behaviours that represent you and your behaviour?

For example, you meet with the top management once a month during a monthly meeting or a management review meeting. And through your comments and body language, you make it clear that you view the meeting negatively. You sit with crossed arms and you fail to offer constructive remarks. You are seen leaving the meeting complaining about it or how it was handled. In such a scenario, what do you think the management is concluding about you? You are not seen as a team player or as a positive addition to a larger group. In fact, they perceive you as a drain on the team. Hence, such behaviour is no way to win support.

Another example could be of a marketing review meeting, where you are required to give your annual forecast. Do you sit there and just grudge about the market being under a recession; the prices being higher, not enough buyers in the

market, and too many product complaints that cannot be resolved? Or do you objectively forecast an optimistic projection, and offer solutions to resolve your problems?

Compare this to a situation where you come prepared for the meeting and present your remarks. You answer questions and point out negative issues. You offer solutions that benefit the team or the firm. And once you are done, you sit quietly and let the discussions move on. Now, what do you think the top management is going to conclude about you? The answer is, you not only appear as well informed but also as someone who is looking after the team. Their opinion about you has improved and you are seen as a great manager but not yet as a leader. So, what is it that you lack?

To counter this problem, consider another scenario where you ask for clarifications instead of raising negative issues, as the meeting progresses. But, before talking about the negative issues, be sure to ask for permission to be the devil's advocate. Thus, you tend to put forth the question in a broader enterprise context and ask how the issues will affect other groups outside yours. By doing this, you demonstrate that you are outwardly focussed and possess leadership skills. This is the larger picture, which may have an impact on your career. Management now sees that extra something that they are looking for in you.

**During interactions:** We interact everyday. Interactions within and outside your groups are fertile grounds where opinions are formed. You are demonstrating your behaviour here. But, is it that of a manager or a leader? How many people outside your group or team greet you? How many of them do you know well enough to call and ask to have lunch with you? How many have you actually called? Answers to these questions are the differences between a manager and a leader. A manager is one who knows how to call and get the



required information or data, but not how to build those critical relationships across invisible boundaries.

Success requires the cooperation of many people in different parts of the company, and leaders know it. To understand their goals and objectives, resources, priorities, constraints, needs, etc, are leadership qualities. And, such understanding comes from reaching out to others and spending casual but valuable time with them. Thus, focussing only on your group or yourself is like taking a narrow view, and could obstruct you from attaining leadership positions.

**Mind your language:** Have you heard of the old saying that your attitude speaks volumes when you open your mouth? I recently met a person who has changed jobs, and now sports a Chief Executive tag on his visiting card. But when you call him, he barks a 'hah' or a 'hummm' into the phone. This brings forth his negative attitude. He is also an example of a wrong choice as a leader. What do you expect people around him to learn from this Chief Executive? So, if you want to distinguish yourself for that new project or position, examine the words you use. Irrespective, of whether you get the job or not, speaking well will cast you in a different light. You will also be seen as someone who is committed to developing your leadership skills. By focussing on your words and actions, you can bridge the gap between perceptions of where and who you are.

In a multiple business unit, we sometimes see that while one unit suffers from demoralisation, mass exodus, stagnated growth, constant blaming, negative culture and personal agendas, the other unit inspite of hurdles is creating unprecedented history. What influences this difference? The difference is due to the leadership. Look outside the perimeter of your job and begin to take leader like steps. "Every leader is a reader," goes the saying. Reading about leadership from great leaders, leadership teachers and from positive thinking books will remove your virus and improve the quality of your software. The amount of time that you spend reading about leadership or listening to leadership development tapes is a vital process in developing yourself.

Volunteer to take on a new project, or plan and co-ordinate large meetings, prepare presentations and be the presenter.

If you are not a good communicator, join a class and learn how to communicate. Learn to express personal feelings, admit mistakes, ask for clarifications, solicit different views and respond non-defensively. These skills will give you the flexibility to respond to different situations effectively. By taking these actions you will create the foundation for becoming a leader.

Share this passion with your managers, peers and staff. Even if you do not get the next job, you are still starting to think and act like a leader. To be a leader, live it everyday in everything you do, and you will make the difference in your own life and in the lives you touch.

To become a more balanced and versatile leader, Fernando Sanchez - the executive coach, says that you must balance different roles. You must interact with your people everyday; inspire them to convert their vision into action and reality. That reality will depend on the versatility you display in the different roles you play. You perform functions that require knowledge, attitude and skills that can be diverse and range from creating a vision,

transmitting information, developing people, creating alliances or raising funds. Can one be a manager and a leader at the same time? Let us examine the different roles you need to balance to do this:

- **As a manager** - you seek and manage necessary resources, co-ordinate actions, generate results, measure and control, report and ensure that you deliver quality of processes, goods and services
- **As a visionary** - you create the vision and the means to communicate it effectively, emotionally and rationally inspire your team members. Act as an agent of change
- **As a coach** - you seek talent, develop successors, expand potential through coaching and interactions
- **As an educator** - transfer information, knowledge and experience through workshops, talks, conferences and instructive conversations. This will develop team competencies and the company's intellectual capital
- **As an ambassador** - form strategic alliances for mutual support, plan effective strategies to develop inter-

institutional relations and promote services, philosophy and history of the organisation

- **As a learner** - proactively seek to improve yourself through attitudes and abilities of directing yourself. Most successful leaders put themselves on a learning path by reading the right books, positive and possibility thinking books, listening to positive attitude tapes, being amongst positive thinkers and attending success seminars. It is important to mix this with your professional subjects as well. ♦



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