



Leadership 101

Key differences between managers and leaders

BY DENISE SKINNER, SR/WA, PMP

Everywhere you look, there are books about leadership, goal-setting team building, emotional intelligence and every other thing that makes, creates and builds leaders. Like athleticism or artistic ability, some people seem to naturally have that certain something to make a leader. But it also a skill that can be learned and refined. So, what is leadership, and what makes a leader? Equally important, there should be an understanding of the differences between management and leadership.

Per Merriam Webster Dictionary, leadership is “1) the office or position of a leader; 2) the capacity to lead; 3) the act or an instance of leading.” Overall, this is a pretty unsatisfying as definitions go. As an alternative Dr. Cindy McCauley, honorary senior fellow with the Center for Creative Leadership, defines leadership “as a social process that enables individuals to work together to achieve results that they could never achieve working alone.” According to this definition from Dr. McCauley, leadership is somewhat of a team sport, which make sense. Leadership does not occur in a vacuum. To be a leader, there must be someone or something to actually lead.

Managers and leaders are terms that are often used interchangeably but are actually very different. While there are management aspects to leadership, it is possible to manage something but not lead. The differences are largely in the distinction between the roles and responsibilities of each. Management involves planning, organizing, problem solving and executing, while leadership is broader and include inspiring, motivating and developing others. Management is focused on the day-to-day, while leadership is focused on the big picture, creating and communicating a shared vision.



According to Harvard Business School professor Linda Hill, one of the world's top experts on leadership, exceptional leaders aren't born with superhuman capabilities. Rather, they have either intentionally put themselves in or been placed into situations where they have to learn, adapt and grow. Through their experiences, they have developed the tenacity and fortitude to be able to inspire and motivate others.

“Leadership is a process of self-development,” she says. “No one can teach you how to lead; you need to be willing and able to learn how to lead. Mostly we learn from our experiences and facing adversity. Stepping outside of the spaces where we feel safe — is a powerful teacher.”

Depending on what book or article you choose, there are several key characteristics in a good leader. Below is a list of some of the most common characteristics:

1. *Authenticity*
2. *Integrity*
3. *Collaboration*
4. *Resilience*
5. *Empathy*

These are all traits that can be developed and refined by being intentional. As we start a new calendar year and are making a list of goals, being intentional should be at the top of that list. It is the first step in becoming the leader you are meant to be! ★