

MANAGER OR LEADER? SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

There is a place for both managers and leaders within organisations, says **Alyson Garrido**. She explores the difference between the two—and what being a ‘doer’ or a delegator may mean for your career.



DO YOU USE THE TERMS

manager and leader interchangeably? How can the differences have an impact on your team or organisation? What effect do these titles have on your career choices? Does it matter?

Managers and leaders are distinctly different and both serve important roles. Too often, however, high performers are promoted into roles that require leadership skills and they are not set up for success.

Leadership skills can be developed, but first it is necessary to consider whether or not a leadership position is part of a high performer’s long-term career goals or necessary for the team.

DOING OR DELEGATING?

Managers are largely the ‘doers.’ They see a goal and work through the steps to reach that goal. Give a manager a job to do and they will execute. Plans will be made, tasks delegated to those who have demonstrated abilities, procedures followed and deadlines met. Managers direct their teams to get the job done and address the project at hand.

Leaders, on the other hand, see a bigger picture and create a vision. They take a helicopter view and drive to innovate. A leader will delegate based on a person’s potential or areas the employee wants to learn or grow. Leaders question processes and envision how investments of time or money will pay off in the long term.

Leaders also create inspired followers.

There is a great difference in how leaders and managers support their team members. Consider a team member who approaches their manager regarding a dispute between the team member and a peer.

A manager may direct the employee to approach the peer and provide suggestions to do so. The manager may even mediate the conflict.

A leader, however, would take a coaching approach, asking the employee how they might handle the situation and offering suggestions and support without inserting themselves into the outcome.

The manager provides a quick and clear solution and the leader has enabled the team member to discover the answer on their own. The manager has ensured that the job is done, while the leader has empowered the team member to assess the situation and possible outcomes independently.

A manager looking to grow his or her leadership skills can look to Gallup’s work on why people follow, outlined in the book *Strengths-Based Leadership* by Tom Rath and Barry Conchie. After all, followers are necessary to call oneself a leader.

A study of over 10,000 US adults (with preliminary evidence showing remarkably similar results in a study in New Zealand, Australia and Canada) showed that leaders are followed based on the four basic

needs of trust, compassion, stability and hope.

Trust allows employees to have faith in their leaders. They know that the leaders will do as they say and back them up when support is needed.

As a manager grows into the role of leader, authenticity is a key component in establishing trust. Others can sense when someone is putting on a show, no matter how well-intentioned that show might be.

RESIST PERFORMING

The old adage of meaning what you say and saying what you mean rings true. Those new to leadership should resist the urge to ‘perform,’ and show up as themselves. Even under fire, leaders show consistency in their behaviour.

Followers are confident that their leaders care about them. New managers can demonstrate compassion in when and how they listen, resisting the urge to spring into action and making themselves fully available.

When a team member is in need of guidance, a gesture as simple as putting down a pen, or closing a laptop demonstrates that the manager’s full attention is on the person with whom they are speaking.

Stability is the foundation on which relationships are built. Gallup cites that employees who have high confidence in their company’s financial future are nine times as likely to be engaged at work as those who have lower confidence about the

company’s financial future.

A key component of creating stability is to have discussions around career progression, ensuring that team members know that they have a path at the company and someone who will support them in getting there.

Hope can only be realised by looking forward. As managers develop into leaders, it is essential to take time to look up from the day-to-day work and share the long-term vision of the organisation. This will create excitement, buy-in and commitment and elicit proactive solutions from employees.

This type of commitment has more impact than mere compliance. Leaders must also act proactively and lead by example in anticipating versus reacting to bumps along the road. Hope will both sustain in good times and lift people during times of difficulty.

There is a place for both managers and leaders within organisations and clear strategies to be better at both. First, consider where you’d like your career to go. Do you prefer to get the work done, or set the strategy? Reach a goal or create a vision? Supervise a project or lead an organisation?

The only right answer is the one that suits your goals. **E**

Career coach **ALYSON GARRIDO** works with clients to identify their ideal career path and present themselves in the best possible light for career advancement. www.alysongarrido.com