

Leadership vs. Management

Kristina G. Ricketts, Community and Leadership Development



Today's groups, organizations, and teams need both effective leaders and effective managers to run a successful operation.

The terms "leadership" and "management" are seen very differently by diverse people. Some individuals see these terms as synonyms and frequently use them interchangeably throughout phrases and sentences. Others approach them as extreme opposites; so extreme, in fact, that they would argue that you cannot be a good manager and a good leader at the same time. Still other people reside somewhere in the middle and realize that while there is a difference between leadership and management, with the right knowledge an individual can successfully navigate both from the same position.

Today's groups, organizations, and teams need both effective leaders and effective managers to run a successful operation. While some obvious similarities (i.e. they both involve influencing constituents or employees; authority and power are generally given with both positions) can be found between leadership and management, there are also some striking differences (i.e. management is often more task-oriented; leadership is often considered more inspirational and visionary). For the purposes of this publication, leadership and management are defined somewhat differently; nonetheless, it is still understood that one person can work efficiently in mastering both fields.

In this document, we will address fundamental definitions of leadership and management, behaviors consistent with effective leadership and management, and the specific types of skills that contribute toward effective management. To conclude, a table will compare and contrast the major components within each field. Ideally, with the right training and development, anyone can successfully navigate the fields of management and leadership.

Leadership

For a quick review, the definition of **leadership** is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.

Breaking this down even more, while there are a variety of leadership definitions out there, there are specific components that are central to the majority of these definitions. Leadership:

- ▶ Is a process
- ▶ Involves influence
- ▶ Occurs in a group context (you need to have at least one constituent)
- ▶ Involves goal attainment

No matter how you operationalize leadership, these components play some small role in the definition or theory utilized.

Leadership Characteristics

As illustrated in *Competent Leadership: What Effective Leaders Do Well* (ELK1-101), some common characteristics and behaviors of effective leaders are as follows:

- ▶ Efficient coaching skills
- ▶ Confidence
- ▶ Consistency between word and action – “walking the talk”
- ▶ Creativity
- ▶ Empathic listening skills
- ▶ Being visionary
- ▶ Inspiring
- ▶ Long-term focus
- ▶ Maintaining a balance between individual needs and team needs
- ▶ Awareness of realistic conditions
- ▶ Strong self-esteem
- ▶ Sense of priorities
- ▶ Service mentality
- ▶ Sincerity
- ▶ Technical or contextual expertise
- ▶ Trust
- ▶ Willingness to share responsibility
- ▶ Willingness to share credit or recognition

It is important to keep these leadership characteristics (found in the left-hand column) in mind while you continue reading the sections on management. Which of these leadership characteristics should also be found in good managers? List your top five choices on the lines below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Management

For most, the definition of management is seen quite differently. This doesn't mean that an individual can't hold both management and leadership responsibilities simultaneously, but management is considered a term separate from leadership. The definition of management is to exercise executive, administrative, and supervisory direction of a group or organization.

Leadership and management share many similarities. Both leadership and management involve influence, working with people, and working with effective goal management. However, the fields of leadership and management can also be considered very different. According to John Kotter, leadership can be considered an age-old concept that has been around for centuries, while management is a concept developed in the last 100 years, in part from the rise of the industrial revolution. Many other scholars share Kotter's viewpoint in differentiating between management and leadership:

- Bennis and Nanus define management as accomplishing activities and mastering routines; to lead means to influence others and create visions for change.
- Rost asserts that leadership is a multidirectional influence relationship; management is a unidirectional authority relationship.
- Zaleznik argues that management and leadership require different types of people

Still there is an overlap between the two fields; when managers are involved in influencing a group of employees to meet its goals, they are operating under leadership. In addition, when leaders are involved in aspects such as planning, organizing, staffing or controlling, they are operating within management. So while we are spending the majority of this publication distinguishing between leadership and management, suffice it to say that while different, they may never be completely separate.

Essential Management Skills

Because management responsibilities are generally much more task-oriented than some leadership responsibilities, one important way to operationalize effective management is to discuss necessary skills. Skills are different from traits or characteristics in that they are the ability to use one’s knowledge and competences to accomplish a set of objectives. Effective administration depends upon three personal skill sets: technical, human and conceptual. The following is a discussion of each:

- **Technical skill:** knowledge about and proficiency in a specific type of work or activity. This may include competencies within a specialized field, analytical ability, or the ability to use appropriate tools and techniques. A good example of this is the knowledge of software language and programming, the company’s software products, and how to troubleshoot for clients when working for a computer software company.
- **Human skill:** knowledge about and ability to work with people, often considered “people” skills. These skills allow a manager to assist group members when working cooperatively as a group to achieve a task or assignment. Examples of this group of skills include being aware of one’s own perspective on issues as well as your employees’ perspectives, knowing the needs and motivations of your staff, and taking into account others’ needs during decision-making.
- **Conceptual skill:** the ability to work with ideas and concepts. This skill set doesn’t involve working with people or things, but focuses on ideas. A manager with good conceptual skills will be comfortable talking about the ideas and details that shape their group or organization. He or she is good at seeing the bigger picture and can translate this understanding into words everyone understands.

Each of these types of skills is important for effective management, and are necessary within different levels of management within a group or organization. Not surprisingly, many of these skills are also useful for effective leadership, generally within a slightly different context.

Management vs. Leadership

So how does one distinguish between leadership and management? In table 1 below you will see a direct comparison between leadership and management activities. An individual can be a great leader, a great manager, or both, but each area requires the mastery of slightly different skills and competencies.

Table 1. A Comparison of Management and Leadership Competencies.

Management Produces Order & Consistency	Leadership Produces Change & Movement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Budgeting • Establishing agendas • Setting timetables • Allocating resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing Direction • Creating a vision • Clarifying the big picture • Setting strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing and Staffing • Provide structure • Making job placements • Establishing rules and procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning People • Communicating goals • Seeking commitment • Building teams and coalitions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controlling and Problem Solving • Developing incentives • Generating creative solutions • Taking corrective action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivating and Inspiring • Inspiring and energize • Empowering subordinates • Satisfying unmet needs

Source: Northouse, 2007, p. 10.

With the mastery of each of these skills and behaviors, one can successfully navigate the fields of both management and leadership. It is usually just as simple as knowing what context is most appropriate to the situation and applying oneself in a leadership or management capacity.

Step Out & Apply

Refer to the table on page 3 and apply what we have learned to your own situation by filling out the questions below.

Are the activities I am currently performing within my job/volunteer position/organization more leadership or management oriented? Why? _____

Do I want more leadership/management oriented responsibilities? If so, how do I go about taking on/requesting more responsibilities? Outline an action plan here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Do I wish my management/leadership responsibilities were reduced? If so, how can I delegate some responsibilities to other able individuals? Outline an action plan here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What leadership competencies do I need to work on to be the best leader I can be? _____

What management competencies do I need to work on to be the best manager I can be? _____

References & Background Reading

- Katz, R. L. (1955). Skills of an effective administrator. *Harvard Business Review*, 33(1), 33-42.
- Kotter, J. (1990). *A force for change: How leadership differs from management*. New York: Free Press.
- Northouse, P. (2007). *Leadership theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Stedman, N. (2005). Leading teams. *SEAL 2005 – Individual Advisory Member Development*. Retrieved on November 26, 2008 from: <http://extensioneducation.tamu.edu/SEAL/LeadingTeams-LP.pdf>.