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# The difference between management and leadership

***By <u>David Hand</u>***

There is an enormous amount of writing and commentary about these two often interchangeable terms. Many of them focus on the motivational aspects of leadership and the practical aspects of management, including the authority bestowed on managers by virtue of their position in an organisation's hierarchy. The following are my thoughts regarding how a we might harness both demanding attributes to be successful.

Firstly, for this article I have defined leadership and management is their broadest terms. Leadership is deciding what must happen, what direction to take. Management is getting it done and getting the organisation moving in the required direction.

Secondly, it is too easy to get hung up on the difference as though it has profound relevance to most of our lives when it does not really. If you are a CEO, you are by definition a leader. The organisation will go where you take it for good or ill. Likewise, you are also a manager. You have subordinates who report to you and the structure which controls the flow of information and decisions is called management. Therefore an effective CEO will utilise both skills in order to take the organisation forward.

Thirdly, working on the weaker of the two attributes will carry you further. We are all much more comfortable concentrating on something we are good at and in business it's no different. We are just as susceptible to devoting too much time to tasks that don't make much difference but are in our comfort zone.

If you are a good leader but not such a good manager, don't brush that off as a mere detail. Instead, it's good leadership to identify your lack of interest in management as a risk to the business. You might consider delegating management of a programme to a colleague and then making yourself accountable to them.

If you are a great manager but struggle with leadership, you might consider taking more risks. Fear of failure often holds us back and the iconic leaders in the business world seemed to have unshakable confidence in their ultimate success. Putting to one side the awkward fact that only the winners ever get a book about their exploits written about them, it is important to remember that the term entrepreneur describes someone taking a business risk.

Risk taking is fundamentally going after an outcome that may not be achieved and provided you have assessed the consequences of failure and have contingency plans in place, you give it your best shot. Every new product or service ever introduced to our market economy was launched by a risk taking entrepreneur.

Another aspect of leadership that has been widely written about is the ability to identify and develop people in an organisation to realise their full potential. The attribute I look for in a future leader is someone who can influence direction in others without the position or authority to do so. People with ideas, who are willing to put them forward without the authority to implement them, are already thinking about the direction and objectives of the organisation.

Leadership and management are not attributes limited to the CEO or the executive level of an organisation. Indeed, it is the identification of these qualities among the junior levels of an organisation that marks them out for promotion and development. For those of you just starting out, consider these pointers.

1. **It's not going to be handed to you.**
   Becoming a leader and manager starts with your own desire and ambition. You must commit both to your own career and to those who employ you.
2. **Work on both leadership and management skills.**
   Develop a reputation for getting things done. Offer suggestions about how to solve problems without being asked to.
3. **Stick around with one organisation for a while.**
   Changing jobs every two years is very short sighted. You are leaving just as your skills and knowledge of the business are becoming valuable.
4. **Find a mentor and take their advice.**
   Doing so takes vision and leadership.