

LEADERSHIP VS MANAGEMENT – WHY THE DIFFERENCE MATTERS

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<http://www.sideroad.com/Leadership/leadership-versus-management.html>

Many books have been written about managing people, and an equally large number have been written about leadership. Some use the words manage and lead interchangeably, and some talk about the differences between the words, building a distinction based on style or behaviors. With all due respect for these books, let me make it simple.

Manage *things* and lead *people*.

Manage

Often we can clarify much by going to the dictionary to look up words we already know. When I looked up manage on Dictionary .com I saw phrases like:

"To direct or control the use of; handle, to exert control over, to make submissive to one's authority, discipline, or persuasion . . ."

Given those definitions there are many things we need to manage:

- Budgets
- Production schedules
- Sales forecasts
- Marketing plans
- Projects
- Work flow

...to name a few.

Obviously, management skills are important. Organizations need the capability of effectively managing the items and resources on the list above (and 100 other things).

The rub comes when you start thinking about managing *people*. People aren't budgets or marketing plans. People are a resource in a whole other classification beyond the other resources of an organization.

People won't perform most effectively if they are being controlled or made submissive to authority. (Hey, I'm just using the words from the definition I read!)

Lead

On the other hand, let's go back to the dictionary.com for some phrases on lead:

"show the way by going in advance, to guide or direct a course, to inspire the conduct of ..." are just a few of the definitions I found.

People respond to being *led*. Just as you can't inspire the conduct of a budget, you won't be most effective trying to manage people.

Which leads me back to my initial premise: Manage *things* and lead *people*.

Beyond Semantics

I challenge you to think about your current practices, habits and approaches to working with other people. If you can find situations, times, or tendencies where you lean towards managing people, I encourage you to try a new approach starting today.

Here are six things you can do to shift your focus towards leading:

1. **Think about how you have felt** when being led vs. being managed. Write down five reasons you prefer to be led and use those reasons as reminders for yourself.
2. **Explain these differences** to those you lead and have a discussion about those differences. Commit to these people that you want to lead them more and manage them less. Ask for their help in adjusting your approach.
3. **Recognize the strengths** in those you work with and find ways for them to express those strengths more often and effectively.
4. **Take the lead.** Show the way by rolling up your sleeves to help a group with a sticky problem or to help them overcome a time crunch. Maybe you know the real work and can help in that way. Maybe you help by getting rid of an obstacle, providing moral support or getting the pizza.
5. **Build relationships.** Remember always that leading is a relationship activity, so take more time and focus more energy on building relationships with those you lead. As you build relationships you give yourself the opportunity to be more effective as a leader.
6. **Think of yourself as a leader.** Call yourself, and introduce yourself **as a leader** and not a manager. The words matter.

Improve your management skills. Learn how to allocate resources, control expenses, and build projects. Use the thoughts in this article to help you continue to improve your leadership skills too. Both skill sets are important. And both always have room for improvement.

They just aren't one in the same... Manage *things* and lead *people*.