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Providing Organization and Human Capital Solutions



## Managing or Leading?

*Easy to identify the differences but more difficult to make the transition*

Many articles, books, and much research has been written about the differences between managing and leading, most urging middle “managers” and higher to become “real leaders.” The differences abound. They range from managers directing processes while leaders lead with ideas and strategies, to more specific issues focusing on the scope and breadth of enterprise-wide activity. Both management and leadership are needed and are never far from each other.

### An example

Recently, I have coached several senior executives who feel like their “management” style needed to move toward more sophisticated and powerful leadership. After a recent session, one leader admitted to an interesting self discovery. She confessed that she had been treating and relating to her direct reports as a group of parts in the puzzle whose work was to fulfill the corporate mission. In her old perspective, this was really just fine. The corporate mission is a good one, and there is nothing wrong with directing efforts toward its fulfillment.

When she looked at the situation through a cooler lens, however, she realized that while her team was getting the job done, there was a lack of creative energy and overall results. She realized a key contributor to this problem was her fairly mechanical, detached, and impersonal approach, although she is generally regarded as a very engaging and warm interpersonal leader.

### A more personal approach

Through her self-analysis, she began to see that real leadership has to do with relating to her people as individuals, each having their own internally driven motivators, career goals and professional desires, as well as ways of playing out who they are in the workplace.

She has:

- \* moved from multiple group meetings to more individual one-on-ones.
- \* started asking more questions instead of providing directives and assigning work.
- \* begun getting to know her reports as real people, each with their own needs, interests, and goals.

Yes, you know what happened. People responded well, energy went up, corporate attachment and commitment increased, and the mission was all the better.

Is this a likely and typical outcome? Absolutely! Is it easy? Absolutely not!! This leader did and is still doing the very hard work of personally investing in each person. Now she comes to them with their professional and personal well being in mind, doing whatever possible to enhance it. It may be in the form of professional training or education, better fit or more challenging assignments, handing off significant projects, and more. This approach requires more creative thought and a personal “pound of flesh.”

### Look in the mirror

I challenge you to look in your own leadership mirror. Are you just getting the job done, treating your people mechanically to fulfill the mission? Or, are you able to individualize growth, stimulate creativity and motivation, and energize teams, one person at a time? It’s quite easy to slip into the easier style, much harder to take the developmental path. But, the rewards are multiple, significant, and long lasting.

Try the harder way of leadership; it’s worth your while!

-- Dan E. Elkins, President/CEO of Strategic Advantages