

## Myth Busting: Leadership VS Management

There have been many volumes written about successful leaders and their styles and warehouses are full of books about management and management theory. So why take the time and effort to read yet another article on the subject with such a wealth of information readily available on line at the click of a mouse? Great question! Even with all that has been written and studied, many people still struggle with understanding exactly what constitutes leadership and what determines great management and how we can understand when, where, and how to use each skill. In addition, there are still many people who confuse the two and even worse, use the terms interchangeably

I will begin with a bold statement: The business world today is overrun with managers. Yet businesses and organizations suffer a critical shortage of true leaders and a dearth of strong leadership examples. Compounding this, there are many myths and misperceptions about both roles and what it takes to succeed in either. Let's look at some of the more common myths and then we will explore in greater detail what describes a great leader and great management along with a couple of examples of outstanding leaders and what they did that was extraordinary.

### **Myth #1: Leadership and Management are equal and interchangeable terms.**

The key premise held by the *X-Stream Leadership Group* is that the principle role of a true leader is to establish a clear and effective vision to do or create something that the organization cannot presently do or accomplish in its current state. Additionally, a leader must develop a strategic plan to achieve that vision and to provide resources and tools needed by the organization or the team to execute that strategy.

Now contrast that with the definition of management. The principle role of a manager is to maximize the potential results of an organization function or process that currently exists and to achieve the goals and objectives established for the organization to do what they currently do or make in order to maximize customer satisfaction and shareholder value to the greatest degree possible.

With these two fundamental definitions in place, it is clear to see that the two roles are clearly different in scope and focus. It is also true that there is no one clear dividing line that separates the two roles in every circumstance. There can be a blending of the two roles. But when that blending occurs, the ratio of the percentages required is driven by the specific needs of the organization or the team at that moment. Knowing when to shift gears and change roles is the hallmark of an exceptional individual.

### **Myth # 2: Leadership and Management require the same skills and capabilities.**

The skills and capabilities for these two functions are quite different. Leaders and Managers are focused on achieving very different goals and objectives for the organization. Effective Leadership requires very strong skills and considerable insight into the ability to understand how best to influence those above you, your peers, and your subordinates in order to improve your ability to successfully implement a clear vision and an effective Strategic Plan. The

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ability to understand the personalities, strengths, and weaknesses of those around you is a very critical skill anyone in a decision making role should develop. However, this becomes an essential skill for one to become an effective leader capable of motivating others to follow them. There are several tools and techniques available to help you in this area. The Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI); the Wilson Social Styles; and your history and experience with the group are but a few of the tools and techniques that can be used in helping you to determine the best way to approach each individual or the team as a group. Once you understand their personality or type, you can place yourself into their comfort zone or describe your idea in terms that they most appreciate or will best respond. For example, if you are trying to influence an “Analytical” personality, use lots of data, facts, and figures. Provide them with clear rational and logic for the approach presented. If you are trying to persuade a “Driver” personality, outline the goals and objectives along with an achievable timeline and focus strongly on the results expected. The SMART formula for goal setting, (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reasonable, and Time bound) works very well with these individuals. For those who are “Expressives”, provide them with the vision and the “what if” information and finding ways to provide testimonies of other people that they respect works very well with this personality type. If you are trying to influence an “Amiable”, put everything into the perspective of the relationship. Explain how the new idea or change will affect current relationships and enhance or enable new ones.

Those engaged in management also need to be able to influence others. But the critical focus shifts from motivating people to achieve something new and untested to understanding the dynamics of normal human resistance in order to get the very best out of your people in their current goals and objectives. Managers need to clearly understand that the reason people act the way that they do is to satisfy specific needs they feel are important. There are times in the work place where a specific behavior used to satisfy their need can be inappropriate or even destructive to the organization and the individual. This is typically the worst case scenario. But all behavior is based on a simple model that is easy to understand. A **Need** of the individual causes a **Behavior** used by the individual that result in either **Satisfaction or Reward**. This can be expressed as  $N \rightarrow B \rightarrow R$ . We need to remember that a person’s behavior is not random or isolated. It is typically purposeful and directed towards the goal of achieving the specific reward or satisfaction that the individual finds important or desirable. Our job as effective managers is to help the individual realize that by changing their approach or their behavior they can be more effective and can achieve even more satisfaction, gain greater results, and achieve even greater success. Helping the individual to change the way they think and act on the job to the greatest benefit of the organization is a critical focus of a good manager.

### **Myth # 3: Some people are just “Born Leaders / Managers”**

We all know people who seem to be “born” with innate athletic ability; or those in our organizations that are informal leaders that people tend to gravitate towards or look up to for guidance or direction. This is common enough to have created a myth that some people are simply born to lead. While an individual may have certain personality traits that make it easier for them to rise to prominence in these informal roles (such as extroverts or good

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communicators), these individuals typically have taught themselves through their life experiences and hard-won lessons to provide leadership skills that seems effortless. It is only effortless to those who do not fully understand what it takes to accomplish this or understand how long it took them to develop the skill for the effect to seem effortless. These individuals have learned through trial and error in many small ways and many seemingly inconsequential decisions what works and what doesn't in order to influence people and groups. While they may have no formal training, their experiential learning has been put to good use to develop their talent.

### **Myth # 4: Leadership is all about Authority**

For some, leadership is all about commanding, directing, or controlling. This can be effective in the short-term, and in some very specific situations (such as emergencies involving life and death or risk of imminent injury) this may be critical. But for this to be the primary role or approach is indicative of a lack of understanding of basic human behavior. ***X-Stream Leadership Group*** firmly believes that ***“True Leadership is the Use of Influence in the Absence of Authority”***©. Anyone can command action from those over whom they exercise authority or dominance. That is not effective leadership but simple compliance by intimidation. True leadership is the ability to engage others over whom you exert no authority and convince them that a course of action or a decision is beneficial for them because of your ability to create a win-win situation for all parties concerned. The higher one rises in an organization, the more you need to be able to work with and influence peers and others within the organization over whom you do not have any control. This can be counter-intuitive for some at lower levels of the “food chain”. Their perception is that “if only I had the authority” they could move mountains. The painful reality is that as one progresses in stature and power, so does the position of ones' peers and superiors. And to that point it is critical that you learn to use the art of influence to accomplish the things you need to get done outside of your organization in order for your own organization to be able to achieve its goals and objectives. Influence (not to be confused with manipulation which is harmful to both parties) is a very powerful leadership skill that can be learned and utilized to benefit the organization and each individual to achieve high levels of performance and results.

Effective management often involves creating a situation where the manager is in a supportive role or clears obstacles for the benefit of the team. This is a very difficult lesson for some people to learn. But the ability to “guide” a team or an organization is not only more effective at sustaining long-term buy-in and commitment; it requires a great deal more skill and technique than simple “brute force” domination. The other end of this spectrum is the “consensus builder”. This can be a very powerful technique when used where appropriate and is very effective in some collaborative environments. But the trade off is the time and effort required to build the consensus and the support required. As in all things in life, the answer is never black and white, good or bad, but a blending of techniques and an understanding of what style or approach would be most effective for the situation you are facing at the moment. The ability to change and adapt your “style” to fit the needs of your organization or the team is the hallmark of a great leader and a good manager!

### A Leader Is...

Many people can recite the names and reputations of those they consider to be exceptional leaders. Jack Welch, Margaret Thatcher, Lee Iacocca, Harvey MacKay, Norman Augustine, Helen Keller, and John F. Kennedy are but a few that immediately come to mind. No doubt many more can be added to this august body of stellar examples. And many books have been written about each. Some examine the “cult of the personality”, others the methodology, still others look at the “inside insight” each used to achieve outstanding success. I believe we can look at these men and women (as well as others) to understand the greater principles of leadership and its importance in achieving goals and objectives. What is it that allowed them to be recognized by everyone as outstanding leaders as opposed to the tens of thousands of other leaders in business over the years?

I believe that special quality is found in their ability to communicate a clear and unequivocal vision that was inspirational and in their ability to motivate others to want to achieve that dream themselves. Each of these individuals had the ability to first decide on what they thought should be done, and then craft a message to their teams that was clear, understandable, inspirational, realistic, and delivered with integrity and credibility, while pushing the envelope of what could reasonable be done. They, and their staffs, were also able to develop a strategic plan to outline the way forward to achieving their vision and in such a way that people easily visualized the end result. This is leadership personified. These two functions, Vision and Strategy are essential for anyone wanting to excel in the area of leadership. The third piece of the puzzle is no less important. That is the ability to motivate people to follow them: not because they have to, but because the want to!

All of us have been in the situation at some time or another where we have to decide whether the time, energy, and resources needed to accomplish something was going to be worth it in the end. And the answer to that question determines whether we even begin on the journey. Great leaders help us with that calculation by providing a clear and undeniable answer to the question of WIIFM (What’s In It For Me). They provide the picture of what the end result will look like or provide, and what it will take to achieve the goal. They do not provide the details or the directions required to execute. That is left up to the team and the individuals. Each member of the team may have a different level of commitment (especially in very large organizations), but each of them knows without fail where they are going and what the result is going to look like when they arrive! Last, but certainly not least, is the ability to be a good follower. Some may think this is an oxymoron. But I assure you, if one cannot demonstrate the ability to follow others, they will never be able to become a great leader themselves. The ability to understand how to help others be successful cannot be underestimated.

For our first example let’s look at Jack Welch. Jack decreed that every operation in his organization would be number one or number two or they would be gone. Now whether one agreed with that or not was an individual decision, but for those who stayed, they knew exactly what was expected and what they had to do to achieve the vision (and survive!). Jack was also legendary for his ability to communicate the same message with the same passion

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and intensity to a group of employees in December that he had been giving (every day) since January. While attending a class in Crotonville (GE's internal business manager development institute) I had the pleasure of hearing Mr. Welsh explain why he considered that such an important part of his ability to drive change and improvement into his organization. He stated that while he (and his staff) had heard the same speech more than 300 times, the people to whom Jack was speaking on that day were hearing the message for the first time. And it was just as important for them to hear the passion and commitment from Jack at that moment as it was for the group that he had addressed several months back. Because for them it was the first time they had heard the message directly from the messenger. And Jack Welsh knew precisely how important it was for a great leader to be consistent and committed to his vision and strategy as well as his programs and initiatives.

Margaret Thatcher was recognized as a very strong leader who had incredible courage and credibility as she led Great Britain through the closing days of the Cold War and the Falklands conflict. She was able to demonstrate great perseverance while overcoming substantial obstacles. One of her great quotes was "I've got a woman's ability to stick to a job and get on with it when everyone else walks off and leaves it." She also said "If my critics saw me walking over the Thames they would say it was because I couldn't swim." She overcame great adversity and strong challenges from her adversaries to become the "Iron Lady". She was not respected because "she was a woman" nor did she expect any different treatment from the "big boys". She more than held her own at their game and was as tough as her reputation.

Those who knew her best also saw that she had a very strong commitment to her vision for her Party and her nation. She was unwavering on those issues that she saw as critical but very willing to compromise and negotiate on those that she saw as being of lesser importance. She was also in possession of a very keen sense of humor that helped her immensely. One of my favorite Margaret Thatcher stories is that after a very bruising and bitter late night staff meeting at Number 10 Downing Street, she took her staff out to dinner. The Madre' D asked her what she would be having. She replied "I'll have the beef." He asked and "What about the vegetables?" She replied "They'll have the beef as well!" A good sense of humor, well placed and well timed, can defuse difficult moments and serve as a break through to ease tension and keep the team or the organization on track. Misused, it can destroy trust and damage relationships.

### **A Manager is:**

The roles and responsibilities required for good management are as diverse as the organizations these positions are created to fill. Yet, there are some key and critical aspects we can evaluate to better understand how to succeed.

The principle role of a great manager is the ability to see the big picture of what is happening now (as opposed to in the future) and understanding the steps and actions needed to achieve a very specific goal or objective in the short-term. This may sound simple but in practice it is anything but! Having the experience and insight to see what is taking place in the present

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and foreseeing actions and consequences that will impact an organizations ability to accomplish its tasks is a critical skill for a good manager. Simply “knowing the job” is not nearly enough. It requires a strong ability to “read” the situation and make decisions that will correct, guide, alter, or enhance what is taking place to make your numbers, provide your service, achieve your production schedule, or satisfy your customer.

The need for a great manager to be able to influence others outside their organization is still an effective skill but not as critical because typically, a manager has relatively good control and/or authority over their area of responsibility. The need to think strategically or to establish a great vision is not nearly as critical in management because their focus should be on today and tomorrow as opposed to next year or the next 5 years. One area where **X-Stream LEAN** sees organizational frustration is this insistence on getting everyone involved with generating the next “Vision Statement” or strategic direction. Most managers have their hands full dealing with the things they are responsible for doing right now.

One of the skills an individual develops as they gain experience and increased authority within the organization is this ability to begin thinking strategically. But not everyone develops this (or even wants to develop this skill). Thinking that everyone should be doing this creates dynamic tensions and frustrations with people who need to know what the destination looks like so that they can effectively manage today in order to get where they need to go to be successful.

As you can see, we’ve only touched on a few of the critical aspects of Leadership Vs Management. There are many more books to write, articles to read, and lessons to learn. Understanding how the two differ and how the two are similar will help you as you journey through your career. Good managers are trained and great leaders are developed for their roles. The true impact of this is that anyone with the drive to learn, the will to achieve, and the willingness to honestly evaluate themselves has the potential to be the next great leader or manager to find themselves and their stories on the shelves of their local bookstore!

Where will **YOU** be 5 years from now?

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