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## **Leaders versus Managers**

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Leadership is a topic or concept most often misunderstood and misapplied in business. For example, good managers are not necessarily good leaders and good leaders are not always the best managers. The two while often connected are not the same although some of the best qualities of good managers are also the best qualities of good leaders.

To start, let me take both concepts (management and leadership) apart at the most basic level. Management is about production or output. Leadership is about vision and strategy. For example, Winston Churchill was a great leader but only a fair manager. Ronald Reagan was definitely a leader but not a manager. Jesus was a leader but his disciples were managers. One of perhaps the greatest managers of all time was Paul- a prolific scholar and writer but not much of a leader. Although Rudy Giuliani talks a great deal about leadership, Rudy is much more of a manager than a leader. He loves the details and frustrates over many things.

So what is the difference? As I said, it is a fine line and elements of leadership are part of management and vice-versa. Here are some essential characteristics of strong leaders:

1. *Leaders are visionary.* They see life and its consequences on a forward, progressive basis.
2. *Leaders are impatient by nature.* They don't like the status quo and believe passionately that their work is about changing things, typically for the better.
3. *Leaders are good communicators.* They speak about change and are constantly in a "preaching" mode.
4. *Leaders are exceptional planners.* They are most excited about strategies to effectuate change.
5. *Leaders are extremely knowledgeable and are interested constantly in learning.* They believe that knowledge is power.
6. *Leaders think big!* They like big ideas, fast pace, and risk. They fully embrace the risk-return principles and are not afraid of change or necessarily failure.
7. *Leaders are not afraid of being disdained or not always liked or having a distinct peer group.* They make decisions and move forward on issues and ideas that are

by their very nature, confrontational. More often than not, a leader is willing to take risk recognizing that in the short-run, more people will not like him/her, potentially with drastic consequences to his/her own personal well being. A perfect example is Martin Luther King.

Managers on the other hand, often if they are effective, have many of the same qualities. The key characteristics of a good manager are as follows:

1. *Managers like to get stuff done.* Their fundamental goal and satisfaction is the completion of tasks.
2. *Managers like details and want most acutely, to see all of the pieces and the direction before they start something.* They always look for the directions in the box!
3. *While managers can give direction, they typically like a direction first.* They would rather complete something than necessarily, start something.
4. *Managers are time oriented people and like to set objectives and goals.* The “devil is in the details” for a manager.
5. *Good managers are also good communicators but their communication is different from that of a leader.* Managers talk in tasks or things to do while leaders talk in dreams or ideas.
6. *Most managers are uncomfortable with changing things rather, they prefer to perfect what they already know or have working.*
7. *For managers, knowledge is about “how” stuff works or the technical side of things.* Contrast this to a leader’s knowledge about “why” things are or “what” needs to change.
8. *Where a leader is a long-term thinker, most managers are fairly short-term in their thought process.* They plan for execution and output whereas a leader plans for a longer horizon.

So, which are you: perhaps some of both or more acutely, one or the other? Are you Einstein – a person who was more of manager than a leader, extremely knowledgeable but much more interested in the way things worked than what his knowledge could do for humanity? Or perhaps, you are Lincoln, frustrated and irritated by events around you and willing to step forward and make enormous personal sacrifices to change the status quo. In either example, both are important and valuable to humanity and to the organization.

Think about it – what would the world be like if there was no Einstein and no Abraham Lincoln?

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