

Just Because You Manage— Doesn't Make You a Leader

By Donna Rawady, Executive Coach

What's the difference between being a strong leader and a strong manager? Someone can be an adequate manager without possessing strong leadership skills. But you can pretty much count on extraordinary managers being strong leaders.

On the other hand, strong leaders aren't necessarily strong managers, but they are artful at setting a goal, clarifying expectations and identifying and recruiting the right management talent to reach the goal. And they create an environment where employees want to succeed.

Confused yet? Janet Hadley, executive coach with VisionWorks in Penfield explains it this way: "Good managers achieve goals by planning, adequately staffing, organizing a complex project, budgeting and problem solving. Effective leaders are proactive and work to anticipate and prevent problems. They produce useful change by setting a direction and developing a vision of the future along with the strategy. And they create a positive work environment that helps ordinary employees become extraordinary."

Hundreds of participants in small-group workshops over the last decade were asked to list the attributes of someone they considered a great leader. Of the litany of skills and qualities listed, very few dealt with the leader's technical knowledge or business acumen. The leadership attributes invariably included words such as character, integrity, fairness, empathy, motivating, strategic, inspirational, trustworthy, listening, and strong presence and social poise.

When workshop participants were asked to list attributes of good managers, the lists generally highlighted similar leadership qualities. What's interesting is that for their managers to be successful, they would have had to apply effective management skills. But seldom were these management skills included on the list.

Perhaps the question here is less about the differences between leadership and management and more about how we, regardless of our roles, might become more effective leaders. To that end, it may be helpful to learn more about how we can become more emotionally intelligent. Extensive research indicates that emotional intelligence is a primary and core strength of strong leaders and a significant factor affecting employee commitment levels.

Emotional intelligence (sometimes referred to as EQ or EI) is the ability to be attuned to one's own feelings and emotions and the feelings and emotions of one's employees and associates.

And, great news — unlike your IQ, you can increase your EQ. More great news if you're a woman, because studies say women may already have the advantage of a natural tendency toward emotional awareness and interpersonal sensitivities.

If you're looking to increase your emotional intelligence, the 1998 Harvard Business Journal article "What Makes a Leader?" by Daniel Goleman is a great introduction. Or you can search the Web for information on EQ.

We may not be able to simply define every difference between leadership and management, but it seems that regardless of our roles and responsibilities, being a better leader is something to aspire to.

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