

Management vs. Leadership—a Balancing Act

*“Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”
~Henry Ford*

Your company needs a mix of both leaders and managers to survive and thrive. Understanding the difference between leadership and management is the first step to achieving that mix. Knowledge of who they each are and why each is important also helps companies know how to groom good leaders and managers.

But why groom good leaders? One reason is that leaders ought to be at all levels of an organization, creating a leadership culture. That way, during times of change and growth, leaders can help the process move more smoothly. And why groom good managers? For one, they are essential when managing a lot of complex details and timelines.

Clearly leadership and management are distinct, but complementary—an idea touted by John P. Kotter, professor of leadership at the Harvard Business School and author of many leadership books. According to Kotter, management is important because managers produce order and consistency, keeping things running day-to-day. Leaders, on the other hand, produce change and movement, allowing a company to grow.

To the right is a chart that synthesizes Kotter’s description of management characteristics versus leadership characteristics. We have also included practical applications of what managers and leaders are responsible for in the “In Action” column. Take a look at the differentiating characteristics and the essential responsibilities each have, and give some thought to whether your organization has a good balance of leaders and managers.

Questions to ask yourself:

- How many leaders and how many managers do you have in your organization?
- Do you have a culture that perpetuates leadership as much as it perpetuates management?
- Do you strive to hire leaders as well as managers?

Management Produces order and consistency	In Action	Leadership Produces change and movement	In Action
Planning/ Budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting targets and goals • Allocating financial and people resources 	Vision Building/ Strategizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting directions for department or company • Creating change strategies
Organizing/ Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing jobs • Hiring staff • Monitoring and tracking performance 	Aligning People/ Communicating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating new direction to staff • Keeping message/ actions of leader credible and desirable to staff • Empowering employees
Controlling/ Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing quality targets • Monitoring results • Creating fail-safe, risk-free work processes 	Motivating/ Inspiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating the vision, keeping the audiences' values in mind • Satisfying basic human needs for achievement (recognition, self esteem, being a part of something important) • Tapping staffs' energy to overcome obstacles

Source: Harvard Business Review on Leadership, What Leaders Really Do, by John P. Kotter
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