

# **MANAGERS AND LEADERS: ARE THEY DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT?**

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A number of leadership theorists have propounded the argument that there is a distinct difference between “managers” and “leaders”. In fact, some of them such as Warren Bennis, Burt Nanus and Abraham Zaleznick have made “managers” and “leaders” to be of vastly different breeds. I would like to refute this argument by simply going back to the basics of management and leadership.

Managers are often portrayed in the leadership literature as being short-term oriented, reactive, preservers of status quo, and concerned with systems and structures whilst leaders are said to be long-term oriented, proactive, agents of change, and concerned with people. Some theorists also state that the “leader” establishes the organization’s vision (mission) and goals whilst the “manager” focuses on how the organization will achieve them.

Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus popularised the saying that managers do things right (efficiency) whilst leaders do the right things (effectiveness). Similarly, Stephen R. Covey states that leadership deals with vision and effectiveness whilst management deals with establishing structures and systems with efficiency as its focus. Are their statements valid with regard to basic concepts of management and leadership or has leadership been oversold at the expense of management?

Let us first analyze the terms “management”, “manager”, “leadership”, and “leader”. Management is generally defined as the process of planning, organizing, leading and controlling organizational activities. In practice, a manager’s actual responsibilities often varies with his position in the organizational hierarchy and the nature of his job. Henry Mintzberg (a renowned management theorist) defines a manager as “that person in charge of an organization or one of its subunits.”

Most management writers agree that leadership is the process of influencing or inspiring others towards the achievement of organizational goals. As stated by Keith Davis, “it is the human factor that binds a group together and motivates it towards goals.” Consequently, a leader is someone who can influence the behaviour of others towards a common purpose. It should be noted that a leader need not necessarily be a manager for leaders are often found in informal work groups.

Leadership is only part of the management process. As aptly stated by Henry Mintzberg, the over-arching role of the manager is “to lead”. Management is a broader

concept than leadership. It focuses on both behavioural and non-behavioural issues whilst leadership focuses primarily on behavioural issues. Managers do perform the leadership function. A high-performance manager is almost always a good leader. On the contrary, an effective leader is not necessarily a high-performance manager for he may lack the other managerial skills such as organizing and controlling. It should be noted, however, that many managers are not high performers because they are not good leaders.

A manager is a good leader when he is able to influence employees to direct their work effort towards the attainment of organizational goals. Managers have the formal authority to lead their employees but they often do not have the ability to lead (leadership). In short, managers do manage people by leading.

It is an established fact that the primary responsibility of any manager is to assist an organization achieve high performance by utilizing all its resources—both human and material. This means that managers must be able to get things done through and with other people. A High-Performance Manager is one who is effective in attaining goals and efficient in utilizing resources. Indeed, Peter Drucker has rightly argued that a manager's performance can be measured in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. Hence, it is erroneous to state that management is concerned with efficiency whilst leadership is concerned with effectiveness.

Peter Drucker includes the determination of the organization's mission and making work productive and the worker achieving as one of the three key dimensions of management. He states further in his book, *The Practice of Management*, that the manager is expected "to give others vision and ability to perform."

To conclude, there is a difference between management and leadership. Leadership is part of management which is a broader concept. However, the attempt by certain theorists to glorify leaders at the expense of managers by sharply distinguishing them is questionable and contradicts the basic understanding of management. Managers manage both people (through leading) and "things" in pursuit of organizational effectiveness and efficiency. In the words of Baldwin, Bommer and Rubin (leading organizational behaviourists), "leadership can actually be considered a subset of effective management."