



talking about...

January 2011

... *designing better relationships for better outcomes*

Leading and Managing

"Most managers were trained to be the thing they most despise -- bureaucrats."

... Alvin Toffler (b. 1928) US author

"Managing" and "leading" are two words frequently used when speaking about organisations, culture and effectiveness. Given they are so commonly used, you would think people would easily understand what those terms mean, but any cursory investigation would lead you to discover a plethora of different definitions. Some people see leadership as part of management. Others see management as a subset of leadership. Yet others see them as distinctly different. I fall into the last category and this month I am going to share some thoughts on what I see is the difference between the two and why I prefer to distinguish them as different approaches to dealing with groups of people.

Regardless of the organisation or community of people you examine, there will always be two aspects involved – people and tasks or outcomes. Therefore both leadership and management approaches have to deal with these two aspects and to be effective will necessarily mean a certain emphasis on both. The fundamental difference I see between managing and leading lies in which one has primacy. No doubt many people would say they are both as important as each other. This is not the point. Although we can place an equal emphasis on the importance of outcome and people, in the end we think in some sequence – one thought follows another – and this pattern subtly defines primacy. In other words, does one think of the task first or the people first.

An outworking of this can be seen in the example of culture. When "task" has primacy, the effort of executives goes into getting things done and culture is seen as something to be done but not THE thing to be done. When "people" has primacy, the executives focus on culture as THE thing to be done and believe this will lead to optimal performance and outcomes. This difference in focus is easily seen in where executives focus their energy and effort.

So how does this apply to managing and leading?

We define "managing" as giving primacy to task or outcome. In this approach, the management team defines what outcomes are required and then finds ways to get their employees to achieve those defined outcomes. It is task first, people second. Although many "managers" see the importance of their people in getting the task done, the tendency that is set up by this approach is one of controlling others. Getting them to do what is required and the strategies employed are then utilised to ensure people do what they should do. This tends to be done through the use of hierarchy, systems and policies that limit what people can do. All of this leads to a lessening of trust between the manager and those they man-

age.

We then define "leading" as giving primacy to people. The idea here is the leader ensures the creation of shared meaning and direction within the group to align people in order to achieve the best outcomes. It is people first, task second. It is a recognition that people do tasks and the more that people are aligned, energized and capable, and able to work in an environment that supports their actions rather than limits them, then the better the outcome will be. It is an approach based in developing high trust, which is the antithesis of control.

As you can see, these approaches have vastly different implications for relationships and trust in the organisation.

It is important to say here that both people and task are important. I am not saying that achieving the necessary organisational goals should play second fiddle in terms of importance. The distinctions I am drawing here speak to the approach used to achieve those outcomes. Ultimately the primacy of task or people has huge implications for culture, engagement and other related areas. You do not have to agree with how we have defined "leading" and "managing", yet I invite you to reflect on the difference we have distinguished here and see how the primacy of people or task plays out in your organisation.

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"The new leader is a facilitator, not an order giver."

... John Naisbitt (b. 1929) US business writer, social researcher

Growing old? ...

Thanks to Garry Conner for this one...

Growing older is mandatory, growing up is optional.

We do not stop playing because we are old; we grow old because we stop playing. There are only four secrets to staying young, being happy, and achieving success.

"You have to laugh and find humor every day."

"You've got to have a dream. When you lose your dreams, you die. We have so many people walking around who are dead and don't even know it!"

"There is a huge difference between growing older and growing up. If you are nineteen years old and lie in bed for one full year and don't do one productive thing, you will turn twenty years old. Anybody can grow older. That doesn't take any talent or ability. The idea is to grow up by always finding the opportunity in change."

"Have no regrets. The elderly usually don't have regrets for what we did, but rather for things we did not do. The only people who fear death are those with regrets."

Just remember: Growing older is mandatory, growing up is optional.

... Author Unknown

"The art of simplicity is a puzzle of complexity."

... Doug Horton

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