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08.13.18 | CAREER EVOLUTION

Are you a leader or a manager? Here's the difference

Leaders inspire people, while managers have people who do work for them. Here's how to figure out which you are, and how you can change.



[Photo: Flickr user [LRD615](#)]

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BY LISA EVANS
2 MINUTE READ

If you have a management title, you may think of yourself as a leader. However, there are some stark differences between how leaders and managers motivate people toward common goals.

Halelly Azulay, founder and CEO of TalentGrow LLC and author of *Employee Development on a Shoestring*, says the main difference between leaders and managers is that leaders attract a following who believe in their vision, while managers have people who do work for them without necessarily any intrinsic buy-in to a particular vision.

A manager is someone who has climbed up the ranks as a result of their experience in the field and fills the gap between upper management and the technical workers on the ground. "Management is about getting things done in the day-to-day, managing schedules, workflow, projects, and performance," says Azulay. Managers set short-term goals, delegate tasks, resolve issues, and enforce policy.

Related: [Stop wasting your time on these four popular leadership styles](#)

Leaders, on the other hand, influence and inspire people to action. They provide a long-term vision and goals for the organization and rally people around those goals. "Leaders shape values and culture and role model behaviors," says Tammy Perkins, chief people officer and leadership expert at Fjuri.

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YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A MANAGER TO BE A LEADER

"The primary distinction between a manager and a leader is that you don't have to hold a management job title to be a leader, and a leader doesn't have to have formal power over direct reports," says Perkins. While not all managers are leaders, both argue managers will be more successful if they develop their leadership skills. So, how can managers become great leaders?

Related: [5 ways new managers can protect themselves from burning out](#)

PRACTICE THE LONG-TERM VIEW

Leaders have a long-term vision for the future and spend less time focused on the day-to-day tasks and more time envisioning what lies ahead. To practice thinking about the future, Azulay recommends reading articles or listening to podcasts about trends in your industry. If you're in the marketing field, for example, learning about artificial intelligence can help you think about changing your plans to adjust to what is coming on the horizon. "You may even share those articles with your team and have a short discussion on them in your meeting to help your team become more future-oriented, strategic thinkers," suggests Azulay.

DEVELOP YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

In order to exert influence and motivate people, great leaders have to be in tune with individuals around them and have a great amount of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence involves having a high level of self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. Practice emotional intelligence by reflecting upon how you react to people and circumstances, pay attention to how you are feeling, and practice responding rather than reacting by taking a moment to pause before answering someone. These small steps can help you hone your emotional intelligence and help you become a better leader.

Related: [Emotional intelligence is the real secret to getting promoted faster](#)

BECOME A LIFELONG LEARNER

Leaders push the boundaries and frequently step outside of their comfort zones to take risks. Committing yourself to doing something that is outside of your subject matter expertise not only helps you to learn a new skill but allows you to practice getting comfortable with being uncomfortable.

ASK FOR INPUT

Being an effective leader requires listening to feedback. While managers tend to delegate tasks and focus on getting the work done, leaders encourage others to take ownership of their own work. Instead of telling people what to do, leaders ask for input from their team and create an engaged workforce who feel that their input makes a difference.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lisa Evans is a freelance writer from Toronto who covers topics related to mental and physical health. She strives to help readers make small changes to their daily habits that have a profound and lasting impact on their productivity and overall job satisfaction. [More](#)

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