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### **Buyer Beware: The Difference Between Leadership and Management**

The common wisdom about the difference between leadership and management goes like this, “you manage things and you lead people.” If this was so, and the answer so straightforward why does so much confusion remain today? Perhaps the answer is, that this oversimplification about the difference between leadership and management is misleading and more than that, just plain wrong.

Consider this quote from the Project Management Body of Knowledge, otherwise known as the PMBOK. “The project manager must know which individuals in the organization are the decision makers and work with them to influence project success.” Ask any Project Management Professional (PMP) how much of the success of their project depends on the relationships they forge with both members of the project team and outside stakeholders and I would be surprised if the answer did not fall between 85 to 95%. It seems that the notion of management as a things oriented concern leaves a great deal to be desired.

The fact is that leadership and management have been caught in a solar eclipse of sorts where the ideas of leadership have been hidden behind that of management. “If a company was well managed, it was well lead” wrote Rost in *Leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. In actual practice the terms leadership and management have been used interchangeably in almost every book about the subjects. Go ahead, pick up any leadership or management book and see for yourself.

The good news is that the eclipse is finally passing. In the complex, ever changing world of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century leadership and management are now seen as two distinct processes, complementary in nature, that provide today’s organizations two necessary tools for their tool box.

Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is about transforming, large or significant change with the overall goal of gaining greater levels of effectiveness. It results from recognition that there are a number of issues within existing systems that simply cannot be managed or legislated away. While these systems may very well be efficient, they provide inadequate, untimely or just plain useless information or results to the end users. The fact is that sometimes there has to be away to declare a system “broken”, take out a clean piece of paper and start over.

On the other hand, management is about small or incremental change with the goal of gaining greater levels of efficiency. Once a large-scale change is initiated and accepted it becomes the job of management to optimize the effort in terms of inputs, work and outputs. More often than not, management has rules, guides, and standard procedures by which scales of efficiency are achieved and optimized.

Establishing relationships and working with people are the lynchpins of both the leadership and management processes. The difference again is that leadership is oriented towards effectiveness and management towards efficiency. The important thing to note is that leadership and management are complementary processes; you need both to make for a comprehensive approach to enhancing the value proposition an organization brings to its customers. Why? Because the complementary nature of the leadership and management processes provide greater levels of organizational agility to meet new and emerging challenges.

Still confused? Need an example of transforming and incremental change that is hard to forget, at least in America? Try this! The Declaration of Independence can be described as a leadership document. It established a large-scale transformational event. It was the “clean piece of paper” that the founding fathers used to establish a new nation. The US Constitution is a management document. It established the Bill of Rights to help manage this new country and the Amendment process as a guide for incrementally changing the rules. By all appearances, it seems the founding fathers were very clear on the difference between leadership and management. Imagine that!

*Note: This article is part two of a five part series entitled: Buyer Beware: The Five Questions You Should Ask Before Buying Leadership Development Services.*

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