

Management & Leadership: They're All about People

Leading and managing are different, but they have the same focus: people.

By Michael J. Carrasco

Whether you're a leadership coach or a management expert, you deal with human beings every day. Both management and leadership require clear communication, transparent decision-making, and trusting relationships. That's why it's vital to understand yourself and the people around you.

As Thomas Teal, *Harvard Business Review* former senior editor, once wrote: "Management is terrifically difficult. It takes exceptional, sometimes heroic people to do it well." The same can be said for leadership. So here are some things to remember to help you do them well:

1. People Are Subjective

"Leadership" and "management" are often used interchangeably. That's a mistake. They serve different purposes. But they do have something in common: People are involved.

Peter Drucker described the leader's job as lifting people's vision to higher sights, raising their performance to a higher standard, and building people's personalities beyond their normal limitations. Teal explained management as not just "a series of mechanical tasks but a set of human interactions."

The focus on human interactions is important to remember. The American Sociological Association describes those "human interactions" as "the ways people behave in relation to one another by means of language, gestures, and symbols."



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These interactions are as simple as talking on the phone with a friend or as complex as helping a patient work through the emotional complexity of an end-of-life situation. Our interactions aren't always direct. They can also be symbolic, as when we communicate through a common identity – for example, religious affiliation, a similar ethnic or cultural background, or even shared trauma or experience.

While leadership and management are two very different fields, leaders and managers both need to understand people. Whether you're leading or managing, you must connect with people – who bring with them their experiences, intentions, and knowledge – to help you achieve the organization's goals.

2. Words Shape Creation

People's interactions are filled with their perceptions, beliefs, identities, attitudes, and emotions. Additionally, our interactions can influence and are influenced by each other's actions and communication styles.

Creating processes or systems requires more than knowledge of content. We use words, which manifest into structures and processes that control how things get done. When delegating tasks, remember that people will filter your words through their own perspectives. You will usually need to say the same thing in many different ways to be sure everyone is on the same wavelength.

3. You Must Be Clear in Your Purpose


People can't read your mind, but your opinions, instructions, and guidance shape how they proceed, so always keep everything simple, clear, and transparent. Explain what you hope to do and how you hope to do it, and set proper expectations.

Make sure that people understand your strategic plan and your mission statement. Don't use fancy words or complicated jargon. Be certain that there's alignment

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between your words and actions. If there's any confusion, clear it up quickly.

Put People at the Core

Leadership brings groups together, using imagination with broad brush strokes to inspire us to be better. Management works the creative process to turn knowledge into completed tasks. Both are necessary. And even though they demand different expertise, people skills are at the core of both. Whether you lead or manage, you need to understand yourself and the people in your orbit so that you can work together to build the organization of your dreams. 

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Lead, Manage, & Know Your People

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