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Leadership and management



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We've all seen the memes:

- Managers light a fire under people; leaders light a fire in people.
- Manage your work; lead your people.
- When I talk to managers, I get the feeling that they are important; when I talk to leaders, I get the feeling that I am important.

To which I'm inclined to say, "Bull!"

Rather than a pair of good and evil twins, I see leadership and management as distinct and complementary skill sets.

Leadership tends to be visionary. It includes clearly understanding one's current state, trends and impending changes impacting that current state, and identifying a future state. Leadership success relies on the ability to convince others to leave behind the current state in which they likely feel safe and complacent.

It therefore relies on trust and the ability to inspire others to move toward the future state, which is presumably better, but certainly unknown.

While leadership describes where we are going and why, management guides us on the journey. How are we going to get there? What resources will be required? Are we proceeding as planned? Once we arrive, are the expected benefits being realized?

Good leaders and good managers have their employees' best interests and personal growth at heart. They both understand that while there are times when they alone must make the tough decision, most situations call for collaboration, both in determining where we're going (leadership) and how we'll get there (management).

Leadership without management looks like Dream Inc. Lofty goals abound, but that's all they'll ever be. I once worked with an IT team that was comprised of only leaders. They always could explain the next great thing in the IT world, but struggled to make the "next great thing" that we implemented two years ago operational.

Fortunately, each individual doesn't have to be both a strong leader and a strong manager. But it's important that your organization have some people that are good, caring leaders and some that are good, caring managers. Nurture those natural skills, and don't glorify one while vilifying the other.



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