**Management versus Leadership**

*by Don Edward Long*

*President & Founder of LONG INSIGHTS, LLC*



While the terms management and leadership are often used interchangeably in the business world, my philosophy is that these are two distinct and inherently different activities that do not necessarily blend, but that can work in parallel to help enhance business operations. Think of it using a railroad analogy. If the two rails of a railroad track run equally parallel with one another, the train will run effectively along its length. However, if those rails were to become intertwined or separated, then the train itself would derail and crash. The same can be said of how we maintain our parallel of management and leadership in our business activities. One is specifically useful in dealing with the inanimate aspects of business while the other is for dealing with people



***Resources***

Another aspect we must also consider when thinking of management versus leadership is how we chose to define resources. While many will define people as a resource, I believe that seeing people as something to be controlled or used diminishes the unique attributes that each member of our business brings to the organization. For the purpose of this paper, we will consider a resource to be those inanimate things such as time, space and materials that we must manage daily as a part of our routine business activities. Leadership skills are what we will need to utilize to develop the traits and abilities within our employees based upon their internal motivators, work ethic, and capabilities.

We can manage time, space, and material resources. Time is constant that only moves in one direction. We can adapt various schedules that allow us to use time more effectively and coordinate activities in a way that maximizes the unchanging nature of ever-moving time. Space can be used more effectively by arranging where we place things and by creating various types of storage or equipment that makes better use of the space we have, or we can move to a location with more space. Material resources, those things that we use in our daily activities to produce the goods or services that are our end-line products, can be managed in a way that makes our operation more streamline and efficient. Examples of this includes things like inventory control where we create pipelines in our order processes based upon product lead time so that we don’t have to pay for excess amounts of material that eats up both time and space in dealing with it. Time, space, and material resources are just what they are and can’t really be altered or behave differently other than how we manage their use.



***Homo sapiens***

People, however, are unique in that they have capability to behave, react, and change in many ways. They cannot necessarily be controlled or managed in the same way that inanimate things can because they are constantly changing, evolving and/or devolving in the environment they are exposed to. Effective leaders understand how their actions, or even sometimes apparent lack of action, can have an impact on the people in their organizations. True north leaders understand their responsibility to set an example, to provide clear direction, to train, and to encourage the individuals throughout all levels of their organizations. They understand that the ability to think, to reason, to be emotional, to learn, to adapt, and to change in accordance with their surroundings requires that people need leaders to guide them while managers deal with the operational aspects of business. While we as human beings can conflict with those resources (time, space & material), those things cannot create conflict themselves.

Within the aspects of leadership, one of our driving objectives should be to help teach our employees how to manage their time, space, and materials (tools, equipment, etc.) that are a part of their job responsibilities. By encouraging and incentivizing constructive behaviors and by identifying and discouraging unacceptable ones, we ultimately teach individuals to manage their assigned resources that allow us as leaders to delegate responsibilities effectively rather than becoming micromanagers in our organizations. As we do this, we will usually begin to see those individuals who develop a stronger work ethic along with their career development (knowledge) within the business unit.



***Avoiding Confusion***

There have been countless books and articles published regarding the nuances of management and leadership, and undoubtably there will be countless more. What I am sharing with you from my vantage point is based upon nearly fifty years of work experience having dealt with both managers and leaders during both my military as well as civilian careers. During that time, I have experienced both good and bad managers as well as good and bad leaders. While I have learned from both the good and bad in both of these categories, it is my hope that I can at least have you consider, by the time you finish this piece, why my perspective on management and leadership should at least be considered whatever your particular position may be in directing others. Additionally, for the sake of clarity, let us consider what an individual’s job title might be, whether it’s called a Supervisor, Manager, Director, etc., inconsequential for the purpose of this article.

Many times, those individuals who operate from a management perspective will often become micromanagers. Not only will they find themselves heavily entrenched in every detailed activity within their departments, but they also often alienate the individuals in their charge. Additionally, not only does a lack of trust develop between the manager and the worker, but the workers themselves often find that they are not getting the opportunities to gain experience and grow within the organizations since they are often excluded from any significant level of decision making. One may be great at managing work schedules, planning activities, and making sure they are operating a safe and efficient environment, but the costs of an individual who attempts to manage people is usually a high turnover rate of personnel and extensive working hours for the manager.

Providing a leadership lead environment can create a much more effective workplace, but only if the person filling that position has the empathetic and communicative skills to engage their workforce in an efficient manner. It is also important for the person operating from a leadership perspective that they understand all the operational elements from a proverbial “thirty-thousand-foot view” even if they have not learned all the detailed elements of an individual’s work responsibilities. A good leader will know where they need to seek additional knowledge to provide better support to their team members, whereas a poor leader’s lack of understanding will reveal itself in time.



***Keeping On Track***

So how is your business tracking? Are you managing the elements of your business in an effective manner and providing leadership to grow the people in your organization? If you’re not sure of the answer to these questions, then I encourage you to contact me at ***LONG INSIGHTS, LLC*** so we can explore the parallels of management and leadership in your company. At ***LONG INSIGHTS, LLC***, we provide the training, guidance, and experience to help keep your business smoothly on the rails.