

Shifting from Manager to Leader

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Just because you have a management title doesn't automatically mean you're a great leader. But making that sometimes-subtle shift is essential for the success of your career and your organization.

There's a lot at stake.

So what's the real difference between management and leadership? Effective *managers* are task-focused and might be described as dependable and organized. On the other hand, dynamic *leaders* are innovative and inspiring. It's like comparing a small pond with the ocean.

Think about colleagues and co-workers who display some of these attributes:

Managers----->Leaders

Knowledgeable----->Insightful

Action-Oriented----->Visionary

Informed----->Influential

Tactical----->Strategic

Instructional----->Inspirational

All of these characteristics are positive, but compare the impact of the first-column attributes with those of the second. No contest, right? Real leaders take management to a higher level—and the results are undeniable.

If you want to successfully make the shift from manager to leader, here are three strategies to guide you in the transition.

First, enhance your personal growth.

Honestly evaluate your strengths and weaknesses, your emotions and motivations. Do you have a solid understanding of the values that drive the way you lead and influence others? Developing this level of self-awareness is usually linked to higher emotional intelligence. By making it a

priority to increase your intangible skills, you'll quickly be recognized as someone with higher leadership potential.

You can also work to improve your leadership impact by increasing your executive presence. Specifically, you might take steps to upgrade your visual appearance and polish your presentation skills. In that same realm, you can focus more on knowledge acquisition to establish yourself as a thought leader—someone whose opinions and insights are regularly sought out and respected.

Second, expand your perspectives.

Instead of thinking tactically, extend your business horizon to make decisions more strategically. Shift from short-term to long-term. Consider global perspectives, particularly if you are working with virtual or dispersed teams. One way to help you maintain this big-picture perspective is by regularly linking day-to-day performance with broader implications for the company's future.

Don't allow yourself to get into a rut. Try to view challenges with a fresh lens, and let go of old processes and procedures that don't provide value. Encourage and reward innovation on your teams.

Third, energize people and relationships.

Recognize that leadership success isn't just about reaching quarterly sales numbers; it's about growing teams and developing up-and-coming leaders. Think of it as participating in perpetual talent management. You'll be perceived as a leader when you consistently identify, attract, hire, and promote top talent to keep the organization moving forward.

Another way to establish a leadership position is by coaching your team members to help them grow and develop at a faster pace. Genuinely engage with them, and ensure they have the resources and support they need. Instead of simply assigning tasks, inspire them by cultivating conditions for success.

Building positive relationships at every level, inside and outside of the company, will further display your abilities as a genuine leader. Show that you can communicate effectively with customers, peers, direct reports, stakeholders, senior-level executives, and industry contacts.

Making the transition from manager to leader is a process that involves deliberate changes and intentional shifts. But when you strategically make those moves, you'll be poised to take advantage of the positive results—for your organization and for your career.