

The Nature of Leadership

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the nature of leadership and the leadership process. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Leadership Defined

The many definitions of leadership each have a different emphasis. Some definitions consider leadership an act or behavior, such as initiating structure so group members know how to complete a task. Others consider a leader to be the center or nucleus of group activity, an instrument of goal achievement who has a certain personality, a form of persuasion and power, and the art of inducing compliance (Bass, 1990). Some look at leadership in terms of the management of group processes. In this view, a good leader develops a vision for the group, communicates that vision, (Bennis & Nanus, 1985) orchestrates the group's energy and activity toward goal attainment, "[turns] a group of individuals into a team," and "[transforms] good intentions into positive actions" (Pickens, 1992).

Leadership is frequently defined as a social (interpersonal) influence relationship between two or more persons who depend on each other to attain certain mutual goals in a group situation (Hollander & Julian, 1969). Effective leadership helps individuals and groups achieve their goals by focusing on the group's **maintenance needs** (the need for individuals to fit and work together by having, for example, shared norms) and **task needs** (the need for the group to make progress toward attaining the goal that brought them together).



TERMS TO KNOW

Leadership

A social (interpersonal) influence relationship between two or more persons who depend on each other to attain certain mutual goals in a group situation.

Maintenance Needs

The need for individuals to fit and work together by having, for example, shared norms.

Task Needs

The need for the group to make progress toward attaining the goal that brought them together.

2. Leader Versus Manager

The two dual concepts, leader and manager/leadership and management, are not interchangeable, nor are they redundant. The differences between the two can, however, be confusing. In many instances, to be a good manager one needs to be an effective leader. Many CEOs have been hired in the hope that their leadership skills—their ability to formulate a vision and get others to “buy into” that vision—will propel the organization forward. In addition, effective leadership often necessitates the ability to manage—to set goals; plan, devise, and implement strategy; make decisions and solve problems; and organize and control. For our purposes, the two sets of concepts can be contrasted in several ways.

First, we define the two concepts differently. In *Management and Organizational Behavior*, we defined management as a process consisting of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling. Here we define leadership as a social (interpersonal) influence relationship between two or more people who are dependent on each other for goal attainment.

Second, managers and leaders are commonly differentiated in terms of the processes through which they initially come to their position. Managers are generally appointed to their role. Even though many organizations appoint people to positions of leadership, leadership per se is a relationship that revolves around the followers’ acceptance or rejection of the leader (Hollander, 1964). Thus, leaders often emerge out of events that unfold among members of a group.

Third, managers and leaders often differ in terms of the types and sources of the power they exercise. Managers commonly derive their power from the larger organization. Virtually all organizations legitimize the use of certain “carrots and sticks” (rewards and punishments) as ways of securing the compliance of their employees. In other words, by virtue of the position that a manager occupies (president, vice president, department head, supervisor), certain “rights to act” (schedule production, contract to sell a product, hire and fire) accompany the position and its place within the hierarchy of authority. Leaders can also secure power and the ability to exercise influence using carrots and sticks; however, it is much more common for leaders to derive power from followers’ perception of their knowledge (expertise), their personality and attractiveness, and the working relationship that has developed between leaders and followers.

From the perspective of those who are under the leader’s and manager’s influence, the motivation to comply often has a different base.



BIG IDEA

The subordinate to a manager frequently complies because of the role authority of the manager, and because of the carrots and sticks that managers have at their disposal. The followers of a leader comply because they want to. Thus, leaders motivate primarily through intrinsic processes, while managers motivate primarily through extrinsic processes.

Finally, it is important to note that while managers may be successful in directing and supervising their subordinates, they often succeed or fail because of their ability or inability to lead (Fieldler, 1996). As noted above, effective leadership often calls for the ability to manage, and effective management often requires leadership.

IN CONTEXT

John Arroyo: Springfield Sea Lions

John Arroyo is thrilled with his new position as general manager of the Springfield Sea Lions, a minor league baseball team. Arroyo has been a baseball fan all of his life, and now his diligent work and his degree in sports management are paying off.

Arroyo knew he had a hard act to follow. The general manager whom John replaced, “T.J.” Grevin, was a much-loved old-timer who had been with the Sea Lions since their inception 14 years ago. John knew it would be difficult for whoever followed T.J., but he didn’t realize how ostracized and powerless he would feel. He tried a pep talk: “I’m the general manager—the CEO of this ball club! In time, the staff *will* respect me.” (Not a very good pep talk!)

After his first season ends, Arroyo is discouraged. Ticket and concession sales are down, and some long-time employees are rumored to be thinking about leaving. If John doesn’t turn things around, he knows his tenure with the Sea Lions will be short.

Questions:

Is John correct in assuming that the staff will learn to respect him in time? What can John do to earn the loyalty of his staff and improve the ball club’s performance?

Outcomes:

During the winter, John thinks long and hard about how he can earn the respect of the Sea Lions staff. Before the next season opener, John announces his plan: “So I can better understand what your day is like, I’m going to spend one day in each of your shoes. I’m trading places with each of you. I will be a ticket taker, a roving hot dog vendor, and a janitor. And I will be a marketer, and an accountant—for a day. You in turn will have the day off so you can enjoy the game from the general manager’s box.” The staff laughs and whistles appreciatively. Then the Springfield mascot, Sparky the Sea Lion, speaks up: “Hey Mr. Arroyo, are you going to spend a day in my flippers?” “You bet!” says John, laughing. The entire staff cheers.

John continues. “At the close of the season, we will honor a staff member with the T.J. Grevin Award for outstanding contributions to the Sea Lions organization. T.J. was such a great guy, it’s only right that we honor him.” The meeting ends, but John’s staff linger to tell him how excited they are about his ideas. Amidst the handshakes, he hopes that this year may be the best year yet for the Sea Lions.

According to Louise Axon, director of content strategy, and her colleagues at Harvard Business Publishing, in seeking management talent, *leadership* is an urgently needed quality in all managerial roles (Axon et al., 2015). Good leaders and good leadership are rare. Harvard management professor John P. Kotter notes that “there is a leadership crisis in the U.S. today,” (Labich, 1988) and the late USC Professor Warren Bennis states that many of our organizations are overmanaged and underled (Bennis, 1989).



REFLECT

What is the nature of leadership and the leadership process?



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned about the nature of leadership and the leadership process. You learned that there are many definitions of leadership, each with a different emphasis, including viewing

leadership as an act or behavior and considering a leader to be the center or nucleus of group activity, managing group processes. In this lesson, the **leadership is defined** as a social (interpersonal) influence relationship between two or more persons who depend on each other to attain certain mutual goals in a group situation, noting that effective leadership helps individuals and groups achieve their goals by focusing on the group's maintenance needs and task needs. You also explored the differences between the concepts of **leader versus manager**, in terms of how they are defined, the processes through which they initially come to their position, and the types and sources of the power they exercise.

Best of luck in your learning!

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