

Strategic Leadership vs Strategic management

Introduction

In this topic you'll focus on defining leadership, which you'll do by assessing the differences and similarities between leaders and managers. You'll consider the various attributes leaders and managers have and whether these are conflicting or complementary. You'll also look at getting the balance right between leadership and management skills. The final part looks more closely at leadership itself, in terms of how far leadership can permeate the organisation and how leadership roles can be shared.

Leader or manager?

'Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall.'

Stephen R. Covey (1989)

We use the words 'leader' and 'manager' quite freely in contexts in which each seems to make perfect sense. We wouldn't think of our prime minister as a 'manager', nor would we be inclined to call a squadron leader a 'squadron manager' or our immediate manager a 'line leader'. It would seem leaders are important people, at a high level of seniority, who stand out from the crowd. Yet we speak about team leaders and this is often a line manager role. And what about project leaders? Again, there's no necessary reason for this to be a high-level role unless it's a high-level project.

Here's what John Kotter has to say about the difference between being a leader and being a manager.

Management is a set of processes that can keep a complicated system of people and technology running smoothly. Important aspects of management include planning, budgeting, organising, staffing, controlling, and problem solving.

Leadership is a set of practices that creates organisations in the first place or adapts them to significantly changing circumstances. Leadership defines what the future should look like, aligns people with that vision, and inspires them to make it happen despite the obstacles. (Kotter 1996)

He further notes that:

- management produces a degree of predictability and order and has the potential to consistently produce the short-term results expected by various stakeholders, such as being on time and on budget
- leadership produces change, often to a dramatic degree, and has the potential to revolutionise processes, products, organisations or even whole markets.

In terms of change, he goes on to say, it's 70 to 90 per cent leadership and only 10 to 30 per cent management.

Leadership and management attributes

Developing this comparison a little further from the overarching attributes, there's a lot more in a similar vein. Here's a comparative list developed by Boyett and Boyett, which synthesises the views of many of the leadership gurus such as Warren Bennis, Robert Townsend and John Kotter.

Leaders	Managers
Do the right thing	Do things right
Are interested in effectiveness	Are interested in efficiency
Innovate	Administer
Create	Maintain
Focus on people	Focus on systems and structure
Rely on trust	Rely on control
Align people with a direction	Organise and staff
Emphasise philosophy, core values, and shared goals	Emphasise tactics, structure and systems
Have a long-term view	Have a short-term view
Ask what and why	Ask how and when
Challenge the status quo	Accept the status quo
Focus on the future	Focus on the present
Have their eyes on the horizon	Have their eyes on the bottom line
Develop visions and strategies	Develop detailed steps and timetables
Seek change	Seek predictability and order
Take risks	Avoid risks
Inspire people to change	Motivate people to comply with standards
Use person-to-person influence	Use position-to-position (superior- to-subordinate) influence
Inspire others to follow	Require others to comply
Operate outside of organisational rules, regulations, policies, and procedures	Operate within organisational rules, regulations, policies, and procedures
Take initiative to lead	Are given a position

Leadership and management attributes. Source: Boyett and Boyett (2000)

Questions

Think back to your video and those of your colleagues what was the balance of attributes you noticed?

Now think of yourself again and where is your balance in the above table?

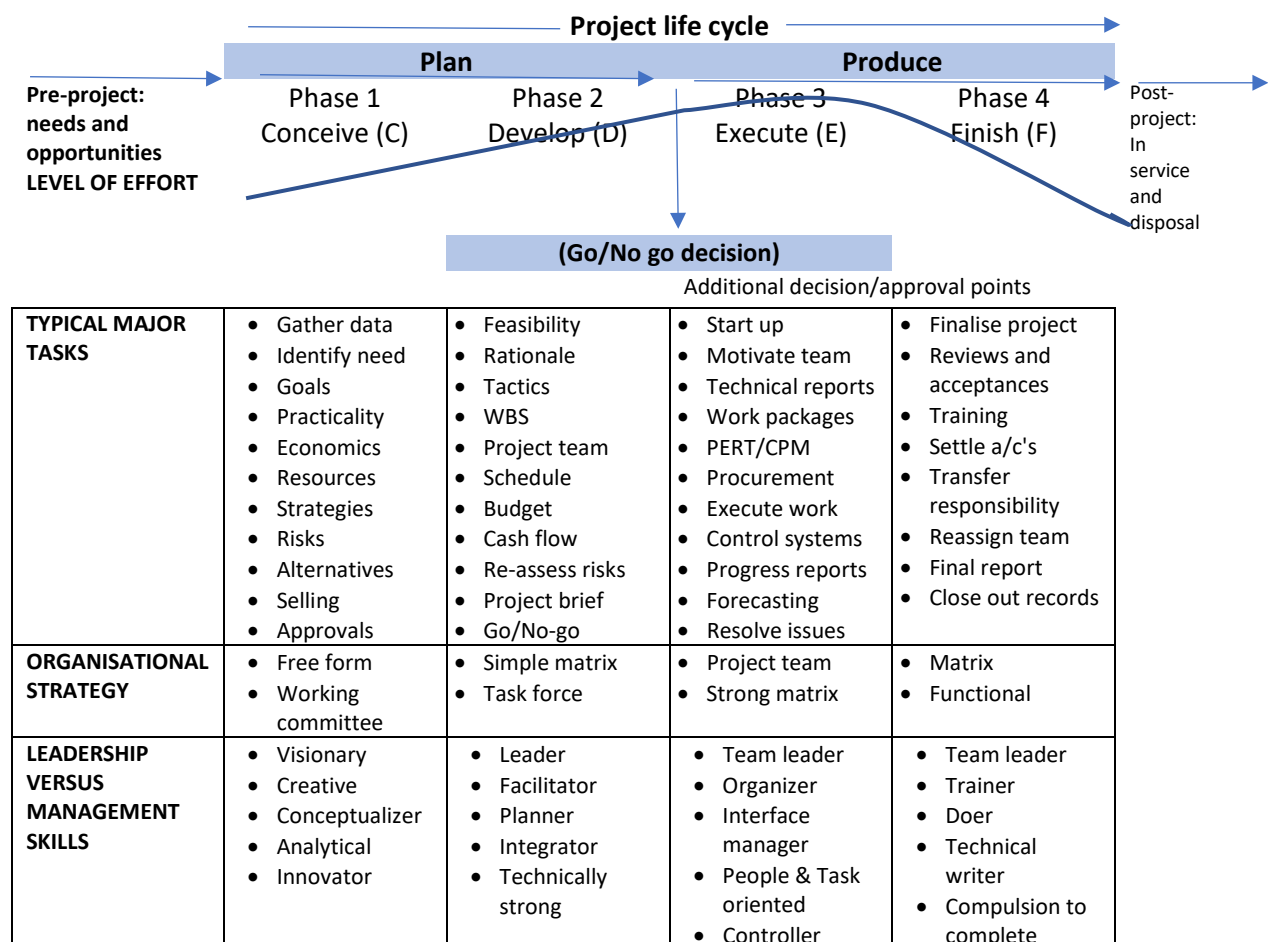
Getting the balance right

The above activity will probably have shown you that you have some strictly leadership attributes and some management attributes. And, when you look at the various attributes of leaders and managers more closely, it quickly becomes clear that they may be seen as not so much conflicting as complementary - you need both! For example, you need to inspire your team with a vision to make the latest strategy take off, but then you also have to plan, monitor and control to ensure that the strategic vision is realised. In addition, as a manager-leader, you need to get the balance right. Too much inspiring and not enough perspiring will not lead to the promised land! For example, US President Barack Obama is considered an inspirational leader, but having 'charisma' and 'vision' will not cut the mustard if he doesn't deliver on the economy. In this respect, taking into account the notion of 'distributed leadership' (which we deal with at the end of this topic), it's the job of his chief of staff to implement his agenda, that is, perform a management function, while Obama himself can deliver on leadership. Indeed, Chief of staff Rahm Emanuel was chosen specifically because of his political experience and knowing how things are done in Washington.

Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon, is a good example of a leader with a sound balance of both leadership and management skills. He's known as a number-crunching geek, who likes to analyse investment decisions carefully. These are the sorts of decisions he's known to prefer; in fact, one of his recurring phrases is 'we can measure that'. On the other hand, he's a person who likes to take risks and innovate. For example, his decision to allow other 'market place' retailers to sell the same book at different prices on the Amazon websites, the switch away from books to other retail products, free delivery if you spend over a certain limit, providing free text search of books - all of these innovations cost money, at least in the short term, but Bezos' customer-centric philosophy is focused on the long term. He figures that what pleases the customer will ultimately make them use the brand and spread the word to others to use the brand. In Bezos' case, it's his ability to know when to ignore the bottom line analysis that separates the leader in him from the manager.

Leadership vs management skills

Being in charge of a project is a good example of how leadership and management skills may interact and overlap - and, indeed, how the balance may fluctuate at any specific time. The following diagram from Max Wideman's project management website (2019) shows the relationship between leadership and management skills vis-a-vis the various tasks and people organisation that form the different phases of the life of a project.



Leadership vs management skills in a project life cycle

Source: Wideman (2019)

Look closely to see how the balance shifts. Wideman points out that leadership is most important at the start of the project - visioning, creativity, innovation, selling the idea - and less important during the execution stage - monitoring and control.

Also, leadership-management skills may be of the same type but operate at different ends of a spectrum as you 'go to one or other end of it. For example, as a communicator you may be a good speaker and able to sell your vision. But then, on a practical basis, you need to physically get this message across by organising appropriate meetings with stakeholders (marketing skills). As an influencer, you want to persuade stakeholders to back your project in the early planning stage, but this may also involve you in taking someone to one side if they're not pulling their weight in the execution stage.

Another example of this spectrum is problem-solving. You may have to develop your project to solve a strategic issue, but then there are the day-to-day issues to deal with, some of which may need creative solutions. Then there's risk at the strategic level and risk at the tactical level ...

Exercise

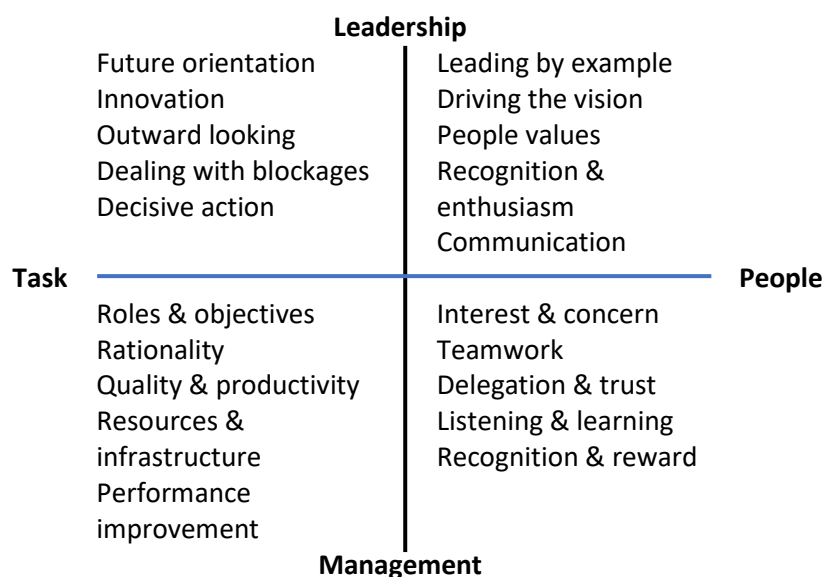
Choose four or five headings: communication, information, analysis, etc., and make an assessment of your own leadership - management skills in these areas. (It might help you to run through the project management skills listed in the table on page 2 for this, thinking about a project you led or managed in the past.)

Have more leadership ability in each of the skills or more management ability by listing some of the key tasks that you have to do and assessing which are leadership tasks and which are management ones, and which you do best. For example, as a strategist, you might know exactly what you want from your strategy, but have difficulty getting this across on a practical level to the organisation.

Skill areas	Leadership-management balance	Areas for improvement

Task or people?

Peter Farey (1993) developed a practical leadership-management model involving a task-people mapping process.



The balance between leadership and management in terms of task and people

Source: Adapted from Farey (1993)

The model represents both attitudes and behaviours. Attitudes are whether the leader veers towards the four axes of leadership, task, people or management. The listings in the quadrants are the various behaviours exhibited by these attitudes.

Again, the problem for the leader is getting the balance right, but this time it involves a task-people balance in addition to a leadership-management balance.

Exercise

Consider the attitudes and behaviours listed in Farey's matrix above and assess where your own leanings lie. In the table below score yourself 1 to 5 against each, where 1 is 'behaviour hardly used' and 5 is 'key and well-used behaviour'. Then add up each quadrant to see which your strongest and weakest areas are?

Attitudes and behaviours	1 - 5	Attitudes and behaviours	1 - 5
Future orientation		Leading by example	
Innovation		Driving the vision	
Outward looking		People values	
Dealing with blockages		Recognition and enthusiasm	
Decisive action		Communication	
Total		Total	
Roles and objectives		Interest and concern	
Rationality		Teamwork	
Quality and productivity		Delegation and trust	
Resources and infrastructure		Listening and learning	
Performance improvement		Recognition and reward	
Total		Total	
What are the implications of this exercise in terms of your leadership-management balance? For example, do some attitudes or behaviours need changing in order to get a more appropriate balance for the role you play in your type of organisation?			

Many managers and too few leaders?

It was noted at the beginning of this topic that a leader doesn't necessarily have to be at the top of the organisation. An organisation can have team leaders and project leaders, for example. (This is an unusual notion in a way: we are used to there being many managers, but not many leaders. Think for a few minutes about what 'leaders' you have in your organisation.) The idea that leadership may permeate the organisation in this way is known as 'distributed leadership'.

James Spillane (2006) saw distributed leadership as focusing very much on interaction between leaders and followers in practical situations.

... leadership practice is not a function of what a leader knows and does. From a distributed perspective, leadership practice takes shape in the interactions of people and their situation, rather than from the actions of an individual leader.

Leadership is typically thought of as something that is done to followers. From a distributed perspective, this is problematic because followers co-produce leadership practice in interaction with leaders. (Spillane 2006)

Types of distributed leadership

Spillane identified three types of distributed leadership:

- **Collaborative leadership:** This is where two or more leaders work together, interacting with followers, to make decisions and solve problems. For example, think of a departmental team meeting involving the head of the department, head of sections, and perhaps more junior roles and how the interaction between all these pushes the agenda forward.
- **Coordinated leadership:** Where leaders work separately or together on different leadership tasks that are arranged sequentially. For example, think of the coordination of leadership roles in the supply chain or through a project.
- **Collective leadership:** This is where leadership is stretched over the practice of two or more leaders who work separately but interdependently. For example, take a training department where the head of training works with one of the trainers to make an evaluation of training needs in the organisation. The trainer makes the formative evaluations in close contact with other trainers, whereas the head of training makes summative assessments based on the feedback from the trainer and other, more strategic considerations.

As you can see, these types of distributed leadership may all occur in the organisation and are not mutually exclusive. It should be noted that much of the research on distributive leadership has been done with regard to educational establishments. However, the theory doesn't seem incompatible with other organisational settings. In fact, the theory is fluid and, in many ways, seems to be stating an obvious de facto dynamic in organisations: that there are LEADERS and leaders and they often interact in both formal informal settings - with themselves and their 'followers' - to move the organisation forwards. And, although there is an emphasis by some on shared visions and goals to make distributed leadership work, Spillane notes that this may not always be the case and prefers to look at practical situations in which people 'co-perform'.

Clearly, distributed leadership needs to be consistent and cohesive to be effective - if there are more leaders, they need to be pulling in the same direction as the overall leader and providing appropriate support by helping the leader define and add detail to the vision. For example, strategy is often seen as a 'cascade', where each layer of management/leadership defines and adds detail to the overall vision at their own functional level. Surely this type of leadership is a superior model to the idea of one leader trying to lead some huge global company on their own.

References

Boyett, J., and Boyett, J., (2000). *The Guru Guide: The Best Ideas of the Top Management Thinkers*, John Wiley & Sons

Covey, S. (1989). *The seven habits of highly effective people*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Farey, P., (1993). *Mapping the Leader/Manager*. Management Education and Development Vol 24 part 2 pp 109-122

Kotter, J.P., (1996), *Leading Change*, Harvard Business School Press. **Books**

Spillane, J.P., 2006, *Distributed Leadership*, Jossey Bass.

Wideman. M., (2019) Leadership and project life Cycle. Project management Wisdom. Retrieved 23.12.19 from <http://www.maxwideman.com/papers/leader/lifecycle.htm>