

## Leaders and managers - united we stand; divided we fall



I am not sure who started the debate about whether or not leaders are different from managers, but I do know it has been going on for a very long time. It may be that Warren Bennis was one of the first people to articulate a position on this topic, (“Managers do things right. Leaders do the right thing”), but he was certainly not the last. To be honest, I am getting a little tired of it.

To declare my position in all of this, I should state right now that I am convinced that leadership is just one of a complex set of skills needed by all managers. In other words, leadership is a component of management and not something different in kind. This is rather contrary to another common myth - that leaders are born and not made. I am also strongly of the view that leadership skills, like management skills, can be trained, with a strong impact on performance.

But I have decided to admit defeat - the voices in favour of leadership and management being different in kind, and two quite separate concepts, are just too loud. So, in a spirit of collaboration with the ‘splitters’, I have concluded that I should write a manifesto for them, to help them get their ideas implemented in full. This, of course, requires an exploration of the ‘real world’ implications of trying to put an idea into practice, and that throws up some silly consequences, but then that is the point of the exploration. So, here we go:

The big idea is that we should come clean with all our clients, and any other Chairmen or Chief Executives who are listening, and try to get them on board with implementing the ‘split theory’ of leadership, ( or is it managership?), and, presumably, help them gain the startling performance improvements that are bound to follow.

I understand that there are likely to be a few practical problems to overcome, but the assumption is that the performance hike will make it all worth while.

First we need to split our selection processes. One set will search for people who are good at doing things right; the other will seek people who are good at doing right things. The first will focus on the skills needed by successful managers; the second will use psychometrics and all the other stuff that is needed to find ‘natural leaders’.

Then we can get rid of the silly cost of so-called leadership training, as it is not needed - there is the first big saving - and focus limited resources on where they will produce the biggest benefit - training managers to do things right.

Now for the big move - we will redraw the organisation chart so that every senior manager role, every middle manager role, every supervisor role is divided into two. To illustrate, we will have a Marketing Director (Management) and a Marketing Director (Leadership). We will have a Production Director (Management) and a Production Director (Leadership). Same for the two CEOs, Chairmen and every other executive and team leader in the place, and all stops in between. Here is an idea of how the roles contributions will be defined:

| Manager roles            | Leader roles               |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Short term results       | Long term growth           |
| Structures and processes | Vision, mission and values |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Discipline   | Encouraging the heart                         |
| Corporate governance - avoiding risks                  | Searching for challenging opportunities       |
| Predictability; reliability; repeatability             | Experimentation and learning                  |
| Defining power and authority                           | Giving power away                             |
| Directing and controlling                              | Encouraging emergence                         |
| Motivating by financial and other instrumental rewards | Motivating by trust, ethics, hopes and dreams |
| Managing with the numbers                              | Leading with the emotions                     |

I could go on for a lot longer, but I think you get the message that the two roles make completely different contributions to the success of the organisation. So now we come to the first challenge. How much do we pay these people?

If we want super-star managers and leaders, we will have to pay top dollar. That raises the minor point about doubling our management overhead. But it does not stop there. People in both roles will need secretarial support, and a computer terminal in their expensive offices. Both roles will generate expenses, and both will have variety of other facilities overheads. Some will even want company cars and other perks. There is, however, a solution to this knotty problem.

Why not have management in the mornings and leadership in the afternoons? That way we can have people in the two roles sharing an office, and pay them half the full time salary, and that means that the vast majority of the excess costs will disappear. You may object that super-stars will not work for only half the appropriate salary, but that would not be a problem, as doubling the number of roles in all organisations will mean that there are plenty of other half-time jobs out there. All we have to do is ensure that the number of organisations doing management in the morning is similar to the number of those doing management in the afternoons. And vice versa with the leadership piece of the puzzle.

A minor practical detail here is how we handle the case if someone needs leadership in the mornings when a manager is in, and someone else needs management in the afternoons when a leader is in, but I suppose waiting for a few hours or to the next day is not that big a deal.

So problem solved. Or is it? What about the coordination needed between the two roles? Between two people who are never in the office at the same time. I suspect that all the easy solutions are not possible, since, for example, running a hand-over session in the middle of the day would make it impossible for both parties to pursue fully the other part of their 'two jobs' career - and there is also the question about how to handle the hand-overs in the other jobs. And how would we handle the hand-over if one of the parties needed to be out of the office in the middle of the day. Rats! I have just thought of another snag. How do we handle the event where a business trip means that an executive has to be away from the office for more than half a day. HMMM.

Maybe we could move to a variable shift roster to accommodate all the possibilities. Alternatively, we could let sanity return, and dump the whole idea. The simple reality is that all successful managers are good leaders, as all successful leaders are good managers. It is a pipe dream to think that there is any practicable alternative to that simple proposition.

## **Natural leaders versus skilled managers**

How about that other contention - that leaders are born and not made? Unfortunately, this does not stand up to close inspection any more than does the 'split role' idea.

Ponder these thoughts:

Leaders need followers - without followers they are the modern day equivalent of Don Quixote who tilted at windmills believing them to be ferocious giants! One implication of this simple reality is that there need to be interactions between leaders and followers. Those interactions will determine the relationship between leader and follower.

Because people have the choice about whether to follow a leader or not, and that choice is made on the basis of judgements made by followers about the leaders, formed during those interactions. The key question is about how the judgements are made. First a note of what does not and cannot happen.

It is impossible to observe leaders' characters, personalities or other qualities - what goes on in people's heads is invisible to the observer. It does not matter how much is said about the qualities of leadership, be they innate or otherwise, one immutable fact remains. Simply expressed, we cannot 'know' the person, from the inside that is.

The judgements we form about people are based on our interpretation of the significance of the way they behave. We may say that person X is an honourable and caring person. We cannot know that by peering inside their head; we only form that conclusion by observing, (with our eyes and ears), how the person behaves, and then form the judgement about the person - we interpret behaviour.

So, followers make judgements about leaders based on their observations about those leaders. What is observed is behaviour - what the leaders do in their interactions with followers. Before we move on, another thought.

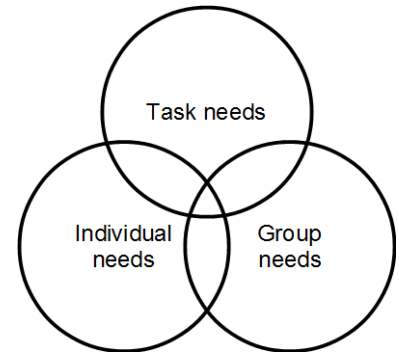
Assuming causal relationships between observed behaviour and the drivers of that behaviour is dangerous. For example, we will never know whether a particular behaviour is conscious or unconscious; natural or contrived; whether it was delivered for instrumental or political reasons; whether it was motivated by fear, ignorance, greed, ambition, care for the other person or even altruistic reasons.

To return to the main theme, after observing the behaviour of the leader, followers make judgements about whether or not to follow the leader - if the leader's behaviour is judged to be not appropriate, then followers disappear like the morning dew. Malicious obedience is more likely than high levels of engagement and devotion to a shared cause!

All of this points to the fact that it is leaders' behaviour that is critical, and behaviour can be taught - we call them conscious behavioural skills. 'Conscious' implies that there is a thoughtful consideration, circumstance by circumstance, about what behaviour is appropriate, and then the deployment of that behaviour. For the purpose of these notes, it is assumed that appropriate behaviour is deployed effectively - in other words that it is skilled behaviour. Sadly, there are only too many cases of leaders, and managers for that matter, knowing what is the required behaviour but failing to do it well.

Whether or not some people find that successful leadership behaviour is natural and easy to acquire and deploy, and while others find it unnatural and difficult, is irrelevant to the logic - at the end of the day it is only the behaviour that counts. A reality here is that some individuals appear destined to be better than others, with more potential for achieving great results than others. This may be because of some inherent limitation in their ability to learn effective behaviour. That is a matter for consideration outside the scope of this paper. What remains is, from the followers' perspective, the only thing that matters is the leader's behaviour. If it appears to them that the behaviour pattern is what they wish, they will follow; if it is not they will not.

Now, none of this is a new idea - it has been around for years - since the 1960s in fact. John Adair, in his action centred leadership model, simply focused on what successful leaders DO, and asked leadership hopefuls to emulate that successful behaviour. The model was simple, easy to articulate, and quite straightforward to learn - see the diagram on the right.



For each circle in the diagram, there is a check list of behaviours. To illustrate, here is the one for task needs:

- identify aims and vision for the group, purpose, and direction - define the activity (the task)
- identify resources, people, processes, systems and tools (inc. financials, communications, IT)
- create the plan to achieve the task - deliverables, measures, time scales, strategy and tactics
- establish responsibilities, objectives, accountabilities and measures, by agreement and delegation
- set standards, quality, time and reporting parameters
- control and maintain activities against parameters
- monitor and maintain overall performance against plan
- report on progress towards the group's aim
- review, re-assess, adjust plan, methods and targets as necessary

Please remember the caveat - there is a world of difference between skilled behaviour and unskilled behaviour. But, having said that, any manager or leader who demonstrates the behaviour pattern required by the check list is likely, all other things being equal, to enable the team to deliver better results than if none of the behaviours are deployed.

Before we move on again, it might be worth considering the implication of this quote from the Business Balls web site, from which the list above was taken:

“John Adair's simple Action-Centred Leadership model provides a great blueprint for leadership and the management of any team, group or organization. Action Centred Leadership is also a simple leadership and management model, which makes it easy to remember and apply, and to adapt for your own situation.” Note the use of the words ‘leadership’ and ‘management’. Twice.

### **The training dimension**

Does anyone actually believe that ‘natural leaders’ DO all of the things noted in the check list above - naturally and with no learning involved? There is, I suppose, an argument that natural leaders will

work out for themselves, over time, that the behaviour patterns suggested above work better than their absence, or other, different patterns of behaviour. Maybe, but that would leave on the table all the failed projects and tasks required for the natural leader to develop their own learning. Might be that a little training would have been a better bet!

We have used an old model - John Adair's Action Centred Leadership - to illustrate the point. Here is an extract from a much more recent development - our own Conscious Behavioural Skills (CBS) model:

| Direction giving                   |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------|----------|
| Designing a strategic focus        |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Overall job demand:                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |          |          |
| Skill application level:           |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Declining market                   |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Static market                      |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Growing market                     |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Volatile market                    |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| <b>Dimension:</b>                  | <b>B</b>                 | <b>R</b>                 | <b>D</b>                 | <b>A</b> | <b>C</b> |
| Helicopter vision                  |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Identifying revitalisation factors |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Defining strategic direction       |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Strategic mapping / re-mapping     |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Building an external focus         |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Analysing market forces            |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Designing value systems            |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| External monitoring                |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Devolving decisions                |                          |                          |                          |          |          |

| Designing a strategic focus            |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------|----------|
| Overall job demand:                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |          |          |
| Skill application level:               |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Mobile organisation                    |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Adaptive organisation                  |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Inflexible organisation                |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Unresponsive organisation              |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| <b>Dimension:</b>                      | <b>B</b>                 | <b>R</b>                 | <b>D</b>                 | <b>A</b> | <b>C</b> |
| Building future orientation            |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Building a need to learn               |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Building strategic thinking            |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Extending time horizons                |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Asking development questions           |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Creating market / external orientation |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Boundary management                    |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Knowledge management                   |                          |                          |                          |          |          |
| Enabling emergence                     |                          |                          |                          |          |          |

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Does anyone believe that for a leader / manager to deploy the skill set above would be bad news? Does anyone believe that deploying a set of behaviours like this would be a natural behaviour pattern? Acquired through instinct alone? The full CBS model, of which the Direction Giving skill set is a part, has been in development for over 40 years, and the process is an ongoing one. Why would any leadership hopeful wish to ignore the results of all that research, and plough their own lonely furrow through the complexities of organisational life, while they work it out for themselves? Assuming that they ever get there, that is.

The whole point about training people, in any job role, is that we can shorten the learning curve that people have to go through to acquire real expertise in doing any job. It matters little whether the skills required are motor skills - the skills that we deploy by using our hands and feet - or managing or leading skills - often deployed by using our mouths as we interact with others. Shortening the learning curve means better performance, and an avoidance of the disasters created by unskilled people who are 'learning from experience'. That is pretty serious stuff when we are talking big and expensive kit, and maybe even threats to life and limb. But if it is a senior manager / leader who is 'learning as we go' it may be the company that is being bet!

All training has to deal with certain challenges, and here are some common ones that apply to both motor and managing skills:

- How to do a training needs analysis, and define a skill set needed that reflects the real workplace and not just the 'theoretical' job?
- How to assess the skills of potential candidates for jobs?
- How to define learning experiences that are focused on developing skills and not just knowledge?
- How to close the gap between the learning environment and the work environment?
- How to keep training up to date and in line with real work experiences, so that 'real world' skills are developed

There are only three additional problems to be overcome with training people in managing, (or leading), skills, when compared with training people to use motor skills. These are:

- Generally, motor skills are easier to define, demonstrate and practice, because they are easily visible, and the causal relationship between action and results can be identified and described.
- Because of the presence of sensing, emoting and feeling entities on the receiving end of the behaviours to be learned, managing skills are much more tricky, subtle and complex than motor skills, and the causal relationship between action and results can be very obscure.
- Assessment of the progress being made in acquiring managing skills is also tricky. As a generalisation, a piece of machinery reacts in a totally predictable way to inputs provided by an operator - it is designed and programmed to do just that. People, with whom our manager interacts, are neither designed, nor programmed, and their reactions can be highly variable, depending on the circumstances in which they find themselves, with dimensions external to the manager / managed relationship.

So, where does all of this take us? Here is a quick summary:

There are bucketfuls of research about successful management and leadership. All the good stuff is behavioural and it all points in the same direction. The behaviours of successful managers and leaders are remarkably similar. Success in business needs a comprehensive skill set, with both aspects of the job fully covered. While there may be some people who find it easier to acquire and demonstrate appropriate management and leadership behaviours, the possibility is open to all. Behavioural skills can be developed, so let us not pretend that senior people don't need training - they do. So, why not get started?