

Fourth Quarter 2007  
Leadership Issue



# Georgia

## CONSTRUCTION TODAY

### Leaders and Managers

Understanding  
the Difference



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# Leaders and Managers: Understanding the Difference



**D**o you think of yourself as a leader? Or do you think of yourself more as a manager? Or are you wearing both hats while performing your day-to-day role? Can a person wear both hats at the same time? How do others you work with see you? Why does it matter?

Most of all, it matters because people expect and need certain things from the organizations or companies they are associated with, either as an employee, a customer, a business partner or a supplier or vendor. Some of this ties in closely to Maslow's basic needs theory which states that all people need a sense of belonging as well as the ability to self-actualize.

It is not unusual to find people who think of the leader and manager roles as interchangeable, but their roles are clearly different. Both roles are important and companies and organizations need their managers and leaders to perform exceptionally well to function at its highest level.

## Increased Attention on Leadership Role

Only recently has more attention been placed on the leadership role and how this role is evolving and changing in order to keep up with the changes and evolution in today's workers. Employees across all industries including construction do not want to be micromanaged or supervised. Instead, they want to know the company's future direction and how it plans to reach its goals. They want a clear understanding of what they are being asked to do to contribute in reaching the goals.

Another change is workers today are working more in teams, and not as individual contributors, not as departments, and not as individual business units or companies. Working in teams places a higher emphasis on collaboration as the key for business success, including the success of construction projects. Driving this is the realization that all team members bring to the table knowledge, experience and ideas. Most people recognize the power of ideas is multiplied many-fold through collaboration. Today's employees need leaders who are coaches and mentors, leaders who provide tools to support collaboration, and leaders who can successfully create an atmosphere in which ideas flow and creativity is heightened. Studies show most of the younger workers today prefer a work environment empowering them to take action on their own versus a "command and control" environment that was so prevalent in the past.

Today, a great deal of organizational learning and training resources are focused on maximizing a person's leadership effectiveness. This reflects the thinking that there are far fewer leaders around than there are managers. This, of course, brings up the age-old question: Are leaders born or made? Yes, it is true—some individuals possess innate leadership qualities. However, it is widely believed leaders can be developed and leadership qualities and skills can be enhanced through a combination of skill building and development activities, diverse and ongoing learning experiences, mentors and coaching.

## Characteristics of Managers and Leaders

So what is the difference between managers and leaders? At its most simplistic level, some people say the difference is people skills. Others say the difference is leaders direct and managers

execute. Others break it down this way—leadership is about direction, movement and change, while management focuses on reliability and consistency. They say leaders help teams achieve their maximum performance in order to accomplish a business' growth plan; managers strive to obtain predictable results and output through the efforts of others. You typically hear the call for leaders to be inspirational, strategic, innovative, adaptable and trustworthy. The servant leadership approach asks leaders to embrace a mindset of serving others. And further, it is widely believed a leader's role is to cultivate other leaders at all levels of the company, and not just at the top, in order to become a high-performing organization.

## The Softer and the Harder Side

Understanding the difference between leaders and managers is rooted in a better understanding of the two parts to any organizational process, the hard part and the soft part. The hard part is typically thought to include the work processes, procedures, structure, metrics, tools and technology. The soft part is the people side of the business that includes attitudes, commitment, buy-in, resistance to change, vision, creativity, motivation and self-leadership. The hard part is about management and the soft part is about leadership. As an example, in construction, the management side of the business has to do with insuring submittals are processed in a timely and consistent manner, and buy-out of the project meets company standards and expectations. The leadership side of the business has to do with making sure all project team members know and understand the expectations and goals of the owner and that everyone on the team has some input into building the schedule to maximize buy-in.

## Self-Quiz (answers on page 11)

**\*Consider each pair of words. Which do you associate with leading? Which do you associate with managing? Place an L for leading or M for managing beside the word(s).**

- ☐ Do things right
- ☐ Do the right thing
- ☐ Administers
- ☐ Innovates
- ☐ Original
- ☐ Copy
- ☐ Sombreros
- ☐ Square hats
- ☐ Maintains
- ☐ Develops
- ☐ Imitates
- ☐ Originates
- ☐ Ask what and why
- ☐ Ask how and when
- ☐ Eye on bottom line
- ☐ Eye on horizon
- ☐ Status quo
- ☐ Challenge the status quo
- ☐ Own person
- ☐ Good soldier
- ☐ Focus on people
- ☐ Focus on systems and structure
- ☐ Relies on control
- ☐ Inspires trust
- ☐ Short range
- ☐ Long range
- ☐ Establishing direction
- ☐ Establishing timetables
- ☐ Producing key results
- ☐ Producing useful change
- ☐ Command
- ☐ Communicate
- ☐ Concentrate on strategy
- ☐ Nurture culture
- ☐ Correlate
- ☐ Isolate
- ☐ Think rivals
- ☐ Think partners
- ☐ Control
- ☐ Empowers
- ☐ Pursue dreams
- ☐ Pursue duties
- ☐ Want good
- ☐ Demands better
- ☐ Design incremental strategies
- ☐ Lay out sweeping strategies
- ☐ Correct strategic weaknesses
- ☐ Build on strategic strengths



It is not unusual to find people who think of the leader and manager roles as interchangeable, but their roles are clearly different. Both roles are important and companies and organizations need their managers and leaders to perform exceptionally well to function at its highest level.

### Relating to Others is Key

While managers and leaders both relate to people, it is thought to be in different ways. Managers are thought to relate to people according to the role they play in a sequence of events or in a decision-making process. Leaders, who are concerned with ideas, relate to people in more intuitive and empathetic ways. The distinction is simply between a manager's attention to *how* things get done and a leader's attention to *what* the events and decisions mean to participants.

What adds to the confusion about the difference between leaders and managers

is that we often refer to those at the top of an organization as the management team, but in actuality, it is their leadership of the organization that is thought to add the most value. The same is true for project managers and superintendents overseeing a construction team where it is the quality or effectiveness of their leadership of the people involved on the project that can make the most difference in creating an exceptionally enjoyable experience for everyone involved. This is contrasted with their management of the project, which has to do with the core competencies of the company and

its employees to effectively construct a building.

Can the same person perform as a manager and leader? The answer is yes, but clearly, the thought process and behaviors of a leader are different from the typical manager role. Organizations and companies can greatly benefit with more leaders on board. You are encouraged to take the self-quiz included on page 9 to better understand some of the differences between managers and leaders. Decide if you are behaving more as a leader or a manager. Consider the steps you can take to enhance your leadership effectiveness and develop into a stronger leader.





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## Answers To Quiz Which is leading (L)? Which is managing? (M)

- M Do things right
- L Do the right thing
- M Administers
- L Innovates
- L Original
- M Copy
- L Sombreros
- M Square hats
- M Maintains
- L Develops
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- L Pursue dreams
- M Pursue duties
- M Want good
- L Demand better
- M Design incremental strategies
- L Lay out sweeping strategies
- M Correct strategic weaknesses
- L Build on strategic strengths

## Additional Reading on Leaders and Managers:

- "Leading at a Higher Level," by Ken Blanchard, Prentice Hall, 2007.
- "Know-How—The 8 Skills that Separate People Who Perform from Those Who Don't" by Ram Charan, Crown Business, 2007.
- "Now, Discover Your Strengths" by Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton, The Free Press, 2001.
- "The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership" by John C. Maxwell, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998.
- "Managers and Leaders: Are They Different?" by Abraham Zaleznik in Harvard Business Review, March-April 1992.

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