

Five Requirements For Shifting From Manager To Leader

Gut check: Are you Leading because you want to? Or are you Managing because you have to.....

Many with significant leadership roles, moved up in the organization from management roles where you excelled. However, new traits are expected of you now as a leader; dramatic shifts from being a manager to a leader. Your thinking has to shift from administering to innovating; from short-term to long-term; from systems to people; from fact-finding to decision-making; and from doing things right to doing the right things.

Leadership expert Warren Bennis describes these traits in his book, *Managing the Dream: Reflections on Leadership and Change*. In my own experiences, I've found these traits to be critical. Below, I explain their importance and the impact they can have on business results.

These are the transitions that you should be going through to effect the positive shift to leadership:

From administration to innovation: When you were a manager, you were expected to administer the business, ensure consistency and stability towards meeting the end goal. As a leader, you will be challenging the status quo, finding and developing new ways on the continuous path to improvement.

Tips: When acting as a manager, you would ensure you accomplished goals by asking "how" and "when." In your leadership role, you should be asking "what" and "why." This is the challenge to the status quo which begins to unveil the opportunities for continuing to improve.

Steve Jobs is the perennial innovator. Over 10 years ago he reflected on Apple (which he wasn't running at the time): "If I were running Apple, I would milk the Macintosh for all it's worth—and get busy on the next great thing. The PC wars are over. Done. Microsoft won a long time ago." We can all agree that we no longer think of Apple in terms of computers. Jobs asked what and why, and now we think of Apple for iPods and iPhones, in addition to their computers.

From short-term to long-term: When you were a manager, your main emphasis was taking care of the here-and-now, the recognizable "short-term view." As a leader your focus should be on the long-term.

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Tips: When you are working towards a short-term goal, you are more apt to focus on the bottom line. When you take the long view, your eye is fixed on the horizon, what is “out there.” Additionally, when you are focused on the short-term, you will protect the present, avoiding dangers or threats to that environment. As a leader, you will be looking at ways of turning these into opportunities.

President Abraham Lincoln gives us many unnerving examples of his leadership for the long-term view. In the midst of a terrible and controversial Civil War, he had to accurately predict the timing and delivery of his Emancipation Proclamation to ensure receptivity among the citizens. The environment he found himself in, highlights the courage and conviction he had for this future state of the Union.

From structure to people. As a manager, you succeeded by focusing on systems or structures to enable completion of your goals. Now you must set your sights on your people as they look to you for inspiration.

Tips: Before you focused on controls and process, now your focus needs to be on trust and being a beacon in the fog of uncertainty. You no longer rely on your ability to create policy, you are now establishing principles that establish guidelines for your team to follow. Before you used your sight and hearing to understand what is going on; now you rely on your intuition to understand what *isn't* being shown or spoken.

Andrea Jung, the CEO of Avon, describes how she transformed flailing Avon by focusing on people. For over 100 years, Avon was known as a cosmetics company. When Andrea took over, she took on a new vision: “Avon would be THE company for women.” By focusing on people, Avon is becoming known for not only its products, but its advancement in women’s health issues, and education.

From fact-finding to decision-making. While in your management role, you succeeded in the logical, fact-finding path towards goal-attainment. But as a leader, the proverbial “buck stops here.” Decisions start and end with you, and your willingness to stand up and take accountability will differentiate your leadership.

Tips: While you were a manager, you went to great efforts to ensure all facts were uncovered and shared for final recommendation. As a leader, you are not responsible for ensuring all facts are considered, but instead, on ensuring a decision is made using those decisions.

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When Lou Gerstner took over IBM in the early 90s, he discovered a company that was virtually bankrupt, and on a track to break it up into a dozen pieces. His decision to keep IBM together, to recognize that the sum of the parts was greater than the individual, required some gut-wrenching decisions. For the first time in IBM's history, lay-offs had to be performed. Through Gerstner's leadership, IBM came away from the near-disaster and has flourished.

From doing things right to doing the right thing. As a manager in your organization, your attention to quality, processes and outputs, enabled you to ensure things were being done correctly. In your leadership role, you are shifting to a higher level, and taking responsibility for ensuring the right things are being done.

Tips: Your management responsibilities focused on the tactical elements of getting the goals accomplished. As a leader, your sights are set on the strategic elements ensuring your teams are focused on the right things.

Johnson & Johnson's responsiveness to the Tylenol scare in the early 80's provides a great illustration: when Johnson & Johnson swiftly came out publicly acknowledging a problem and pulling product off the shelves, they not only quelled a potential catastrophe for the company, but also elevated its reputation in the market-place as a company that was truly consumer-driven. Johnson & Johnson could be relied on to do the right thing.

Transitioning from a manager to a leader requires all of these shifts. These shifts can be small or they can be seismic, but in every case, the successful leader will choose to make them. Check your gut: are you making these changes? •