



**Nancy Proffitt**

Proffitt Management  
Solutions  
326 Maddock St.  
West Palm Beach, FL  
[www.ProffittManagement.com](http://www.ProffittManagement.com)

561-582-6060  
[info@proffittmanagement.com](mailto:info@proffittmanagement.com)

## **ARE YOU A MANAGER OR A LEADER?**

Administrators have the greatest impact on employees' careers and well-being, as work remains a significant aspect of people's lives. Administrators determine whether employees enjoy or detest what they do. They're also responsible for the organization's prosperity.

A flood of content cites two broad administrative categories: manager and leader. Is there a distinction, or are the terms one and the same? The designations are sometimes used interchangeably; other times, people draw a significant distinction.

Why does it matter? After all, everyone has to report to someone, and people want to make the best of what they're given.

But the distinction is important because employees' impressions of their administrators can spark or sink both parties' careers. It's therefore important to recognize the conspicuous and more nuanced differences and similarities between managers and leaders.

The definitions are far from straightforward, and they're the subject of much debate. If you've categorized yourself as one vs. the other, you've likely been influenced by specific definitions you've read and the ones you prefer. You'll rarely be told what others make of your administrative style. You're riding on the impression you have of yourself, which ultimately determines how you lead people.

Any complex comparison reveals a definite overlap between managers and leaders. Both have people to oversee. Both want to make a difference and be successful, as guided by their definition of success. Each will deal with ups and downs, with people who are helpful and those who obstruct

progress. Many managers and leaders assume their roles without much formal training or preparation. Though some common ground exists, there are numerous dissimilarities.

Mindset is the primary distinction, business executive and philanthropist Vineet Nayar states in a 2013 Harvard Business Review article, "Three Differences Between Managers and Leaders." The way you tackle administration helps decide whether you manage or lead. Do you focus on yourself (the manager's focus) or on others (the hallmark of a leader)?

## DIFFERENCES IN PURPOSE

The purpose behind your actions defines your legacy. Each of us has a purpose, regardless of whether you fully recognize it, and it manifests as specific priorities.

An old adage applies:

- A manager makes use of people to benefit the organization. A leader makes use of the organization to benefit people.

Other views are more specific:

- A manager is driven by an immediate purpose, revolving around self. A leader is driven by a purpose higher than self.
- A manager executes a vision by assigning work. A leader sets the vision by encouraging ideas.

Nayar prefers the following distinctions:

- A manager counts value by tracking tasks, checking boxes and expecting others to add value. A leader creates value by empowering people, making them better and helping to add to the value.
- A manager accomplishes a goal through people. A leader achieves success with people.

Alan Murray, author of *The Wall Street Journal Essential Guide to Management* (HarperBusiness, 2010), offers another view:

- Managers plan, organize and maintain. Leaders inspire, motivate and develop.

## DIFFERENCES IN FOCUS

Focus describes areas of concern and targeted centers of attention. Your focus reveals what's important to you and, by default, what's not as important. Factors that influence focus include your qualifications, experience, fears, opinions and priorities.

## A message from Nancy...

Let me ask you:

- Are the people on your team engaged and committed or just collecting a pay check?
- Do you have the right people in the right seats on the bus? Are you in the right seat?
- Is the high cost of turnover eating away your organization's bottom-line?
- Are your processes and procedures (or lack thereof) delivering productive and efficient results?
- How comfortable are the members of your senior team managing and leading others?

In today's highly competitive environment, it's no surprise that "what got you here may not get you there."

At Proffitt Management Solutions we are fully committed to providing a unique blend of team and individual development and executive coaching sessions where participants achieve more focus, a sense of purpose, and better results in their leadership roles.

Find out how services such as individual or team coaching and development, motivational and skills workshops, seminars may help you better answer those 5 questions and benefit you...

The following distinctions apply to managerial vs. leadership focus:

- Managers tend to be more short-term oriented, looking for quicker paybacks. Leaders tend to have a longer-range outlook, looking for future paybacks.
- Managers make use of others' skills. Leaders want to develop others' skills.
- Managers focus on systems and procedures. Leaders focus on people and possibilities.
- Managers are keyed into efficiency. Leaders are keyed into unity.

## DIFFERENCES IN AUTHORITY

Authority is one of the clearest distinctions between managers and leaders. How you oversee, direct and assess completion of staff activities radically affects your direct reports. As with other aspects of administration, authority can take dramatically different tracks:

- Managers reserve authority for themselves. Subordinates submit by requirement. Leaders push authority down to the farthest possible level. Followers join in by choice.
- Managers assure compliance by following an authority map. Leaders develop trust by charting the authority map.
- Managers enforce the pace. Leaders set the pace.

Nayar offers an interesting observation:

- Managers create circles of power, where people are required to comply politically. Leaders create circles of influence, where people desire to follow.

## DIFFERENCES IN BEHAVIOR

Everyone notices your behavior, and it takes only a few actions to reveal your character traits. People watch your behavior and discern who you are, looking for patterns that indicate what kind of support they'll receive. Behavior always signals to employees how difficult or easy their work experience will be.

The following behaviors distinguish managers from leaders:

- Managers tend to operate under a separate set of rules, with little concern for people's impressions. Leaders exemplify a noble set of rules that others attempt to emulate.
- Managers prioritize their personal needs. Leaders prioritize the needs of others.
- Managers seek notoriety for themselves. Leaders seek notoriety for their people.
- Managers' notoriety is based on their technical attributes. Leaders' notoriety is based on their interpersonal attributes.

## THE PROPER BLEND

After reviewing the distinctions between managers and leaders, should we assume that one administrative model is superior to the other? Should you adopt a purely managerial or leadership model?

Murray asserts that the two models go hand in hand, so trying to separate them is detrimental. You must blend the two approaches to create an optimal administrative strategy. One approach, on its own, is insufficient for success.

Today's world of commerce presents greater pressures and shorter deadlines than ever before. As technology continues to accelerate, we're conditioned to expect instant results, and tolerance for excuses has dropped sharply. People often joke that faster processes cause mistakes to happen faster, and there's some truth to this.

There's little, if any, slack for workers to step back and catch their breath. Such conditions require more of the manager model, with an administrator who takes the reins and keeps everyone on track. In the heat of the moment, we need pragmatic solutions more than inspiration or vision. We rely on managers who have established short-term strategies and confidence in their own abilities.

Conversely, Murray points out, we face a new economy, where workers have developed perspectives that differ greatly from those of previous generations. Employees are prioritizing personal growth over project effectiveness, meaningful contribution over meeting standards, and a sense of purpose over organizational goals.

New administrative approaches are required to make the most of available talent and keep people engaged and productive. Every employee must grow professionally, regardless of level. Managers must therefore have the right leadership skills and know how to develop people.

A widely accepted management framework, based on Henri Fayol's early 20th-century model, calls for four administrative functions:

1. Planning
2. Organizing
3. Leading
4. Controlling

Planning has short- and long-term aspects. Short-term planning accounts for the process, manpower and timing needed to meet organizational objectives (what effective managers do). Long-term planning accounts for the vision and strategy needed to grow the company and enhance its purpose (what successful leaders do).

Organizing utilizes management skills to plan projects, provide resources and initiate processes.

Leading comprises four additional building blocks:

1. Communicating
2. Motivating
3. Inspiring
4. Encouraging

Each component is driven by a leader's interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence—the softer skills that draw people to a cause. Well-rounded managers hone these skills and demonstrate an optimum blend of leadership and managerial efficiencies.

Controlling keeps projects on time, monitors the quality and quantity of work performed, and adjusts to scope changes or setbacks.

## APPLYING THE BLEND

Administrators who cling to a sole managerial or leadership approach handicap their organizations. Ask yourself: Do I lean too heavily on one approach or the other?

If you're too management oriented, you'll have difficulty building trust. People will see that your priority is to get work done, not to benefit them. Your personal goals will seem to override anyone else's. You'll be regarded as uncaring or disinterested—unworthy of being followed.

You'll witness a spiral, as your heavy emphasis on tasks breeds resentment, thereby reducing employee effectiveness. You'll fail in the long run, surrounded by a staff that backs away from or leaves you.

If you're too leadership oriented, you won't be able to maintain order. Tasks will be performed incorrectly or late, and productivity will plummet. Crises will overtake your people, who lack guidance on immediate issues. Your boss will assume you're unable to handle the job, and you'll lose your staff's respect.

The ensuing frustration will cause people to lose faith in your ability to lead the organization. Confidence in their future will drop, along with hope, positive attitudes and motivation. Employees may believe you're a great person, but not a good enough administrator.

Administrators who work toward achieving both managerial and leadership capabilities excel in the workplace. Their employees are engaged and motivated, willing to give of themselves because they know their leader is willing to give to them. Trust and morale are high, as people know they can depend on their leaders' relational and technical skills. They can count on their leaders to bring everyone through any trial, while valuing each team member's contributions. In this ideal workplace, nothing can stop the team from achieving success.

Evaluate your leadership and management skills. Have you successfully blended both arenas? Can you shore up shortcomings in either area?

Call upon a trusted colleague, trainer or management coach to help you spot the areas that require enhancement. Your organization will benefit greatly—and so will you.