

# **Leaders and Managers**

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## **Are you a leader or a manager?**

What percentage of your time do you spend sorting out problems? Be honest! And how much time do you spend planning, spotting trends or just thinking about your business?

It doesn't matter what title you have on your business card. If you spend most of your time working 'in' the business – the roll-up-your-sleeves type stuff – you're a manager. If you make time to work 'on' the business, you are allowing yourself space to be a leader.

## **What do they do in that corner office?**

The corner office, the swish furniture, the lunches and dinners with clients – a good life, right? Skilled leaders form the backbone of any successful business. Their hard work makes it look easy. Leaders are the ones creating the plans, steering the company with their eyes on the horizon, assessing risks, keeping tabs on the competition – all the while keeping the staff motivated to stretch to their highest potential.

## **Why do so many leaders struggle?**

New leaders seldom have good role models to draw inspiration from. Managers are often thrown into leadership roles with the assumption that they'll instinctively know what to do. Leaders often spend more time researching the best lunch spots than they do working on the business. Then comes the time when they look around and realize that they have no followers – and without followers we're not leaders.

## **I have to keep putting out fires!**

There are so many fires to put out every day that there seems to be no time left for working on the crucial business of leadership. This is a sign that there's not enough planning. Leaders who make time to look ahead and organize their time, as well as enabling everyone else to use their time to the fullest, have the fewest fires to deal with. It's like keeping your accounts up to date all year instead of the final crunch before tax returns are due.

## **Everyone can be a leader**

Whatever their position in the organization, everyone can learn leadership skills. True, not all of us are destined to be head of a major company, but leadership in every role is important to business success. When the latest change comes down from senior management, by getting on board and encouraging others you become a leader. By thinking of more efficient processes, you become a leader. If you have responsibility for others, the team will be most productive if you lead them rather than simply manage the work.

**How can I develop leadership skills?**

Gather all the information you can about successful leaders. Take a leadership course, either through your company, at a continuing education class or online. Read books about successful leaders and note their methods of addressing the work they have to do.

Seek out leaders you admire in the organization and ask them the secrets they have learned. Look out for examples of poor leadership and learn from those too!

**How can a company prepare their future leaders?**

First, to encourage up-and-coming employees, they must demonstrate that leaders will be able to move to positions of responsibility within the organization. Leadership skills should be highlighted as critical to the ongoing success of the business. Providing formal training is a start – this shows the importance the company attaches to leadership skills. Partnering employees with an experienced (and successful!) leader as their coach or mentor is a powerful way of enhancing leadership skills. This allows the future leader to glimpse the role they will have within the company, as well as keeping the skills of the current leaders sharp and focused.

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