

Leading the way into 2011

Understanding how you guide your team will achieve better results all-round...



Leaders have followers,
managers have employees,
management make widgets,
leaders make change.

Seth Godin

Authors have tried to unpack the values, behaviours, attitudes and characteristics of our successful leaders and managers. And in working with SMEs over the past 15 years, I've noticed that many struggle to distinguish between the art of leading and the art of managing and where these fit in their businesses.

Let's start by defining. Leaders see the future – they look three to five years down the line – and plan where they want to be and how they're going to get there. They spend more time working on the business than in the business. Managers on the other hand are administrators of the various departments within the business and see to it that day to day operational work is executed.

Without getting too complicated, let's also consider your "personal" journey and how this impacts your role as a leader or manager. Author Robin Sharma explains it like this: "Be a positive source of energy, develop the best in you, so then you can develop others/your team. If you do not have good personal leadership, your team has more chance of failing."

There are formulas that you can hold on to to guide you when it comes to leading and managing. To find your formula, start by assessing where you are today. Score yourself on a scale of one to 10 on this 13-point check list. Do it quickly and take note of the areas in which you need to improve.

SME leaders and managers learn the ropes as they go, but in the current business environment this can be a recipe for disaster. You need to accelerate your learning and skills in areas of leadership and management.

SCORE YOURSELF

1 = Poor and 10 = Good

- ✓ Are you great at building a cohesive team?
 - ✓ Do you empower your staff? In the old days it was called "delegation".
 - ✓ How are your communication skills, written via emails, verbal at meetings – do you give a clear message?
 - ✓ Do you have a work environment that helps employees grow and develop – what development training plans do you have?
 - ✓ Do you share your vision with key employees?
 - ✓ How much time do you spend working on your business vs. in your business?
 - ✓ Do you manage by walking around the office/factory floor? (Many years ago I had a manager who managed by sitting at the bar on a Friday night – where it was compulsory for everyone in the business to show their face and have at least one drink. This manager would sit and listen – as the people drank more beverages they began to open up more about issues, opportunities, challenges. I found this rather fascinating to say the least – but it seemed to work.)
 - ✓ Do you share the successes of the business, i.e. incentives, profit share?
 - ✓ Do you continually express an attitude of positivity, you know no problem faced, but only opportunities and challenges?
 - ✓ Have you defined your style and communicated this to your team, i.e. are you autocratic, are you charismatic, are you a driver, are you a democratic leader? These styles may seem self-explanatory – but you must let your staff know. Surely some of them will identify with your style and some not – try and find out.
 - ✓ Are you quick, moving with speed in making risky decisions or are you conservative?
 - ✓ Do you demonstrate that you are good at planning, organising, monitoring and motivating your team? (Read Michael Armstrong's *How to Be an Even Better Manager* – it's a good one.)
- As you are aware, we are a combination of two of these four styles, Driver/Controller, Analytical, Amiable, Expressive. (See further on for their characteristics).

Successful managers and leaders have strong analytical skills. Sorry if you are an amiable/expressive type – you could very well struggle. But remember there are always exceptions to the rules.

Authors also talk about one's intelligence in your business, not how clever you are; it does help though, but what about Emotional Intelligence, Business Intelligence, Strategic Intelligence, People Intelligence? I know of a business where the owner had great business intelligence, knew his business and market backwards, inside out, but had poor people and strategic intelligence – yep, you guessed it, the business struggled for many years; the business was a marginal player in its industry.

You as the leader must show the way, you must learn how to embrace change and see it as an opportunity, not a threat – it's in your mindset.

So what do you have to do to be a better leader? Play a leadership role in running your business.

SIMPLE FORMULA

Put in place and communicate your values. These could be:

Quality – We will strive to do our best in everything we do.

Integrity – We will be honest in all we do.

Dignity and respect – We will treat our colleagues with dignity.

The trick is to continually communicate this to your team – via emails, via signs in your work area and at company functions and team meetings. Reinforce at every opportunity – simply put, the issue is communicate consistently.

Next step in the formula – once you have developed your vision – where you want the business to go – same as values; communicate, communicate, and communicate your vision to the team. You must then demonstrate through your actions that you are leading the way, giving feedback to your team.

I had a client who gave feedback using percentages in terms of company performance (obviously some figures in your SME businesses are confidential and could be misinterpreted by some

team members.) This client would communicate that we are at 97% of sales target, 103% of gross profit, 89% to budgeted expenses, 93% of overall profitability – plus other benchmarks units produced vs. target etc. – you get the point.

Now let's look at two sales managers and how they managed their teams; you be the judge as to who was more successful. The first is a very successful salesman turned sales manager, who must still sell to key accounts. He held weekly team sales meetings, discussed technical issues, went through call reports – not in depth, i.e. call rate, looked at forecasts for the new week, said he would dual call with reps, but never did. (Looking after his own key accounts.)

The other sales manager followed this formula/process – had weekly one-on-one meetings with individual reps, addressed call rate, addressed call focus on high, medium or low customers, looked at quote closure rate, covered client entertainment and relationship building, had a team meeting once per month, and after each one-on-one meeting sent reps emails or follow up areas and areas for action and report back at the next meeting and did dual calling. Was he respected more? No, not really. Did he achieve better results? Yes.

Here's a curve ball with regard to the above simple case study. The first sales manager's personality style consisted of being amiable and analytical. The second sales manager's personality style was driver/controller and analytical.

So be aware of your personality style, understand it very well and ensure you communicate your style to your team – then they will know what you are about and understand your actions better – and you will achieve better results. **YB**

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