



# *The* Look & Sound *of* Leadership™ SINCE 1990 *Executive Coaching Tips*

## LEADERSHIP VERSUS MANAGEMENT

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Are leadership and management really different? And does it matter? This month's coaching conversation explores what separates leadership from management. And what connects them.

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### Which is which?

Reiko had leapfrogged her colleagues. Now, while still leading her large group of accountants, she was going to become the CFO of a division as well. Her boss, a huge supporter, got her coaching so she could step boldly into her new role while still juggling the old one.

Early in Reiko's coaching, she and I met with her boss, Scott, to hear him articulate his goals for her coaching.

"She's so good," he said to me in front of her. "She deserves everything she's getting. So my goals for the coaching? I just want to be sure all that management and leadership stuff doesn't bite her in the ass. She's going to have to be firing on all cylinders from day one."

I asked what he meant by "all that management and leadership stuff."

"Well, she's going to have to keep leading her current group." He looked at Reiko. "You're the reason they're superstars. They sure weren't like that before you took over. And now they're workhorses. They're terrific. I don't want their performance to decline just because you're taking on this other role. They're still your people and you're going to have to keep leading them just like you have been."



Scott turned back to me and continued.

“This new division she’s going to be managing? Boy, are they in trouble. Reiko’s going to have to make some tough choices about their work and then put systems in place to make it all happen. It won’t be easy to manage.”

Then the conversation turned away from his ideas about “all that leadership and management stuff.”

After he’d gone, Reiko and I compared notes about what we’d each heard. When I mentioned the portion about leadership and management, I said, “I’m not certain, but I think Scott and I label our columns exactly opposite when it comes to what we think leadership does versus what management does.”

“Opposite how?” she asked.

“Actually,” I said, reconsidering, “maybe he doesn’t distinguish between leadership and management.”

“What did you hear?” she asked.

“Well, he talked about your current group of superstars. And he talked about you ‘leading them’ to make sure their performance doesn’t decline. To me, that means he wants you to *manage* their performance. I don’t think of managing performance as a leadership challenge. I think of it as a *management* challenge.”

“Really? For me, it’s both.”

“How so?” I asked.

### Leadership and feelings

“Well, yes, the work needs to get managed. Of course. And, boy oh boy, do we manage the work. There’s no excuse for any yellow lights any more. But the way I got them there, and the way I keep them there, *that* feels like leadership to me. I tell them, over and over, how important the work is. I cheer them on and I pump them up. That’s all leadership.”



I said, “So for you, leadership has a lot to do with motivation.”

“You bet,” she said. “I learned that from my first boss. He was fantastic. He used to say all the time, leadership isn’t about what people do, it’s about what people feel. That’s been my mantra ever since. To me, leadership is about getting people to care about the work, whatever that takes.”

“Sounds great, Reiko,” I said. “So what did you think when Scott said the new division needs to be ‘managed’? That you’re going to have to make tough choices about their work?”

“I think he’s right,” she said. “There are some serious issues in that division that need to be straightened out. It’s going to take at least a year to fix it all.”

“And will the fixing be a management challenge or a leadership challenge?”

She shot back, “Won’t it be both?”

“I don’t know,” I said. “I’m asking.”

### Come together

“I think it’s both,” she said. “I’ve got to put systems into place. That’s management. But I don’t know what those systems will *be* yet. I have to figure out what the work is going to look like before I figure out what the systems are. And figuring out what the work looks like, that’s leadership. So, yes, I think it’s both.”

“Figuring out the work is leadership? Not the way people feel?” I asked, referring back to her leadership mantra.

“Oh, people are going to feel plenty! Don’t worry about that!”

“Why’s that?” I asked.

“Aw, this poor division. Everyone hates them. They’re so beat up. They don’t know who they’re serving and so everyone’s pissed at them because they’re not serving anyone. Part of my job – my *leadership* job – is going to be deciding who we serve. No matter what I decide, people are going to get stirred up. There



will be a whole boat load of feelings. I have no doubt!”

I said, “It sounds like this is fun for you.”

“It is! Motivating people. Aligning people. I love that stuff. Not that we talk about it much around here.”

“Why not?”

“We just don’t seem to. We talk about systems and measurement and planning. That’s all management all the time. But this other stuff? Motivating people. Aligning people. I don’t talk about that stuff with anyone.”

“Could you?”

“You know what? Now that I think of it, I do! Not with my peers. And not with Scott. But with my direct reports, I think I do talk about it with them. I talk with them about how they’re leading their people.”

“What do those conversations sound like?”

“I don’t know. Nothing structured. You got something for me?”

### **Separation with overlap**

“As a matter of fact, I do,” I said. “I have a way that I talk about how leadership and management are different. The two big pieces come from John Kotter who was at Harvard. He was the big thinker about leadership and management. And I’ve put my own little twist on it. It goes like this.

“Leadership and management are separate.” I extended one arm towards the windows and pushed my palm out. “Let’s say leadership is way over there.” I extended my other arm towards the opposite wall, saying, “And management is way over *there*. They are really separate. They even have separate reasons for existing. *And*,” I indicated the middle space, “between them, they share one big set of skills that’s a ‘must’ for succeeding at either.”

“What is it?” she asked.



“Well, before we jump into the middle, can we talk about why each one exists?”

“Sure!”

“Let’s start with management. Kotter has a one-word banner that arches over everything in the management bucket.”

“And that word is...?” she asked, like a drumroll.

“Complexity,” I answered.

“Good word for management,” she said.

“I think that’s why management exists,” I said. “Management exists to deal with all of work’s complexity.”

She ticked on her fingers. “Staffing, budgeting, planning. That’s what we’re talking about, right? All management and all complex.”

“Right,” I said, then ticked on my own fingers, “Measurement. Controlling. And good old-fashioned problem solving. They’re all complex and they’re all management actions.”

“You know what else is complex?” she asked. “Organizations themselves!” That felt so true I laughed. She went on. “So what’s the *raison d’etre* for leadership?”

### **Leadership’s *raison d’etre***

“Change.” I answered.

“That’s the word from Kotter?”

“Yes,” I said. “That’s why leadership exists. To help people during change – which never ends.”

“Are things like motivating and aligning on the leadership side?”

“You bet!” I said.



“What else?” she asked.

I waited. After she didn’t speak, I offered, “Recognizing patterns. That’s a leadership behavior.”

She nodded, “Sure, because it’s looking from so high up. And management has to look from so *close* up. Oh! Hey, what about strategy and vision? They belong on the leadership side, right?”

“I’m cautious about those words,” I said.

“Really? They feel low hanging to me. Why are you cautious?”

“Because all too often leaders say they want to work on ‘vision’ and ‘strategy.’ Then they get together and do a lot of planning that’s all in the weeds. They’re using a management tool to solve a leadership problem. It’s usually not very effective.”

“So you don’t think leaders should think about vision?”

“No, they should! Just not through planning.”

“Then how?”

I thought a second, then said, “Do you remember you said you have to figure out who the division is going to serve? That question has no real measurement in it. Direction, yes. But measurement? I don’t think so. What are you going to consider with that question? Deliverables, yes. But also people. Maybe values. Maybe service. You’re going to consider qualities. So they’ll be hard to measure.

I went on, concluding, “Your question – ‘Who does this division serve?’ – can lead you to a vision. Planning can’t.”

“For me,” she said, “questions like that – ‘Who do we serve?’ – those are the fun questions. I guess I’m better on the leadership side than the management side.”

“Hmmm, that might be a perfect segue into that middle skill they both share.”



## **The shared skills**

“Oh, right! What is it?” she asked.

“Relationship skills. To be effective, leadership and management both need the whole broad array of relationship skills.”

“Like...?”

Ticking a new list, I said, “Strong, positive networks. The ability to persuade. Having influence. Using emotional intelligence.”

She clucked and gave an exaggerated wave of dismissal. “Oh! Those tired old things?”

I laughed. “Right? But think about leadership. It exists because change is constant...” I suspended the sentence.

She finished the thought. “...And that stirs up a boat load of feelings!”

“Which makes relationship skills crucial! *And...* there’s complexity.”

“Uh-Oh! Feelings a-plenty comin’ right up! Relationship skills required.” She shifted rhythm, saying, “The relationship skills are hard for me when I’m managing.”

“Hard how?”

“When I’m in the weeds, sometimes I completely forget to be nice. So I’m learning to slow down and remember my relationship skills. It’s not a bad thing. It just takes more energy.”

She nodded, then pointed to the three different spaces. “OK. Leadership is change. Management is complexity. Relationship skills are in both.” Then, cocking her head at me, she asked, “So what’s the point of this whole conversation about leadership versus management?”

“You first. What are you taking away from it?”



She spoke thoughtfully. “Separating it out like that is helpful. It reminds me to be conscious of when I’m standing on which side of the room. What tools do I want to use? But do you know what I’m curious about?”

“What?” I asked.

“Do they sound different?”

“Management and leadership?”

“Yes, do they sound different?”

Exploring that question is the next coaching conversation of [The Look & Sound of Leadership](#).

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### Core Concepts:

- Leadership is about change. And change is eternal.
- Leadership isn’t about what people do, it’s about what people feel.
- Leadership includes:
  - Motivating
  - Aligning
  - Recognizing patterns
  - Creating visions and strategies
- Management is about complexity. Work will not happen properly without complexity. Complexity requires management.
- Management includes:
  - Staffing
  - Budgeting
  - Controlling
  - Measuring
  - Problem solving



- Relationship skills are needed to be effective in both leadership and management.
- Relationship skills include:
  - Strong, positive networks
  - The ability to persuade
  - Having influence
  - Using emotional intelligence

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