

Assessing Your Leadership Skills—An Exercise

From the previous exercise, you now have a beginning picture of the leaders and managers in your organization or team. How do you feel about your own and others' perceptions of your role? Did you receive any unusual feedback from your team? Do you see the different ways in which your organization supports or detracts from leadership development?

To clarify the distinction between leaders and managers for yourself, we invite you to engage in an activity that will allow you to see where you fit on the continuum between leader and manager. The inventory contained in Tables 1 through 4 focuses on the characteristics, functions, philosophies, and orientations of leaders and managers.

On the left side of the table are the characteristics we commonly associate with managing, and on the right side are the characteristics demonstrative of leading. In-between is a scale from 1 to 5 with which you can assess yourself regarding each characteristic. On the scale, circle the number that best indicates your place on the spectrum between leader and manager. If, for example, you seek situations that are stable and guarantee prosperity more than situations that involve change, uncertainty, and growth, you would circle 1 or 2 for the first characteristic, depending on how often you seek these situations. If you favor neither situation you would circle 3. If, however, you are drawn more to change, uncertainty, and growth, you would circle 4 or 5. Think about how you usually function and circle the number that is closest to your true thoughts and behaviors. If you are attempting to gain insight into your own tendencies, there are no right answers, only honest ones. This inventory gives you a beginning assessment of your leadership abilities. We recommend that you use it for reference throughout the workbook and refer throughout other exercises. As you develop new skills and try out new behaviors, your picture of yourself may change. You can then refer back to this inventory and use it as a tool to measure your growth.

The Leadership Inventory

Table 1: Characteristic Differences Between Leading and Managing

	Managing	Your Assessment	Leading
Seeks situations of	Stability Prosperity	1 2 3 4 5	Change Uncertainty
Focuses on goals of	Continuity Optimization of resources	1 2 3 4 5	Improvement Innovation
Bases power on	Position of authority	1 2 3 4 5	Personal influence
Demonstrates skills in	Technical competence Supervision Administration Communication	1 2 3 4 5	Diagnosis Conceptualization Persuasion Dealing with ambiguity
Works toward outcome of	Employee compliance	1 2 3 4 5	Employee commitment

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Table 2: Functional Differences Between Leading and Managing

	Managing	Your Assessment	Leading
Planning strengths	Tactics Logistics Focus	1 2 3 4 5	Strategy Policy formation Seeing the big picture
Staffing approach	Selection based on qualifications	1 2 3 4 5	Training for positions Networks Developing shared values
Directing methods	Clarifying objectives Coordinating Establishing reward systems	1 2 3 4 5	Coaching Role modeling Inspiring
Controlling methods	Standard operating procedures Monitoring	1 2 3 4 5	Motivation Self-management Policy formation
Performance evaluation approach	Rewards Discipline	1 2 3 4 5	Support Development
Decision-making qualities	Analytical Risk-averse Rational	1 2 3 4 5	Intuitive Risk-taking Ambiguous
Communication style	Transactional Exchange Reciprocal	1 2 3 4 5	Transformational Committing people to action Persuasive

Table 3: Philosophical Differences Between Leading and Managing

	Managing	Your Assessment	Leading
Oriented toward	Programs & procedures	1 2 3 4 5	People & concepts
Resources valued	Physical Fiscal Technological	1 2 3 4 5	People Informational
Information base of	Data, facts	1 2 3 4 5	Feelings, emotions, & ideas Things to learn
Human resources as	Assets to meet current organizational needs	1 2 3 4 5	Corporate resources for today & future development
Change attitude	Implements change by translating vision	1 2 3 4 5	Sees change as a raison d'être

Table 4: Expected Results of Management and Leading

	Managing	Your Assessment	Leading
Defines success as	Maintenance of quality Stability & consistency Efficiency	1 2 3 4 5	Employee commitment Mutuality/trust Effectiveness
Does not want to experience	Anarchy Employee disorientation Surprise	1 2 3 4 5	Inertia Lack of motivation Boredom
Is unsuccessful when experiencing	Deviation from authority Employee resistance Low performance	1 2 3 4 5	Consequences of selecting wrong direction/vision Failure to communicate vision Lack of buy-in

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Now that you have completed this inventory, we suggest that you review your responses. Notice in which sections you favor management more than leadership. Does your character and philosophy tend more toward leadership, whereas your functions and orientation to results tend more toward management? Do you notice any patterns?

You might share your assessment with a partner who knows you and your role at work. Ask your associate for feedback about your perceptions of yourself. Is his view similar to yours? How does it differ?