

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a white ceramic mug. The word "BOSS" is printed in bold, black, sans-serif capital letters on the side of the mug. The person is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the person's torso and arms. The lighting is bright and natural, suggesting an office or indoor setting.

**BOSS**

# ARE YOU MANAGING OR LEADING?

By Patrick Sweeney, *President*  
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For those of us who lead organizations through the fall of 2008 and on the other side of 2009, we were all **CHALLENGED** as never before.

Many of the difficult, yet necessary decisions we had to make left painful memories.

**T**he world was changing, and we all had to change, on a dime, in order to stay afloat. Strengths that many leaders and managers thought we never had came to the surface. Likewise, our limitations became more apparent as many of us found ourselves with our backs against the wall.

As we start to move away from that wall, and have some fleeting moments to reflect, it is important to ask what we have learned about ourselves as leaders. How did we prevail through the uncertainty? When were we managing? When were we leading? And what is the difference?

In some ways it can be easier to pinpoint what we are doing when we are managing. We can list activities like analyzing our profit margins or creating a marketing plan or selecting an insurance broker. That's what we are doing when we are managing. When we are leading, it's more about being. Leading is when we are creating and sharing our vision for what can be. It's when we are creating an environment where new achievements can be realized.

As Warren Bennis, a pioneer in leadership studies, said, managers do things right, while leaders do the right things. When we are managing, we are implementing. When we are leading we are initiating.

So that brings us back to the fundamental question of how you are spending your time. How much of your time are you spending leading? How much time do you spend managing? And, equally important, are you able to recognize when someone else has leadership potential? For ultimately, as leaders, one of our most important responsibilities is to develop other leaders. That starts by knowing what we are looking for. In ourselves. And in others.

To identify leadership potential, you have to know the difference between when you are managing and when you are leading and recognize which qualities you are drawing upon when you are doing one or the other.

We all possess different strengths and attributes that make us unique. And different qualities come through when we are managing than when we are leading. It is important to be able to recognize those differences - in ourselves - so that we can shift gears and tap into the different strengths we possess when we move from, let's say, managing a team to creating a strategic vision.

Which of the fundamental qualities that help define you come out at different times? Is it your empathy? Your perseverance? Your persuasive skills? Your resilience? Your ability to connect the dots? Or your ability to connect with people?

Which of your key qualities are you tapping into when you are managing a project? When you are leading an important discussion in the executive committee?

As leaders, most of us find ourselves switching, almost chameleon-like, from leading to managing, depending upon the challenge or opportunity we are facing.

To be most successful, it is important to know what we're switching from and what we're switching to.

In our studies, we have found that top-performing managers and the most effective leaders share many of the same qualities. That's what helps the best managers rise through the ranks into leadership. But there are also some critical differences to be aware of in the qualities that distinguish the best managers from the best leaders.

As you review these, consider which of these qualities you share. And which ones you draw upon in different situations.



## First the similarities:

The best managers and the best leaders are bright, empathic, assertive and persistent. They are also open to new ideas and intrigued by analyzing situations, solving problems, thinking strategically, and ultimately, creating new solutions. In addition, they like to work quickly and multi-task.

## Now the differences:

Leaders are less willing to follow the status quo than managers. Leaders, as a group, are also less willing to accommodate others and less concerned with being liked. Leaders are more interested in motivating others than in pleasing them. Those qualities allow leaders to make tough decisions and communicate in a clear and straightforward manner.

So, the question is: which of those qualities come out in you when you are leading? And which qualities do you tap into when you are managing? Can you recognize the difference in yourself?

It is not that one approach is better than the other. It is realizing that the right approach is necessary for the right situation.

And understanding that when you are managing and when you are leading, you are actually tapping into different aspects of your core personality.

The more you realize the different strengths you are tapping into when you are managing and the unique qualities you are calling upon when you are leading, the more versatile and effective you will be. What qualities are you drawing upon when you are attempting to solve a problem? Struggling to understand others? Taking a necessary risk?

The more you know about yourself in each of these situations, the more you'll be able to connect with your inner strengths. And the more you connect with your inner strengths, the more you will connect with others.

Skip Cimino, the CEO of Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, gets this. He has explored management and leadership roles in various capacities before coming to Robert Wood Johnson. In fact, being at the helm of this hospital is his first foray into health care. What he has learned about himself and about how he manages and leads has prepared him for what he is doing now.



He says, “All of those opportunities as a leader, quite frankly, gave me the benefit, as well as the experience, in coming into this role knowing as to how to shape, lead, nurture, guide and direct the management team here and to seek the input as well of the employees.”

What has he learned about leading? Cimino knows what it is and isn't. “It's not about the leader standing in front of the pack. Yes, your responsibility is to help lead, shape, guide and direct, but you can't do that as an individual to move any organization, particularly a large organization. It takes lots of people working together in a harmonious fashion to make it happen.”

This leads to an interesting dilemma for companies. If managing people and leading an organization draw upon different strengths, how can potential leaders rise through the ranks of management? If managers succeed by maintaining the status quo, they'll blend into the woodwork and their leadership skills won't be recognized. However, if they rock the boat, other managers may feel threatened and try to subvert them.

That's why many organizations inadvertently suffocate potential leaders.

How can organizations break out of this cycle to truly identify and develop future leaders?

It starts with having a very clear and focused strategy for identifying and developing future leaders in your organization. This involves recognizing and rewarding your best managers. Then you need to have a formalized approach to identify those who rise to the top of your management ranks and help them determine if they also have true leadership potential. And, for those who do, you want to invest in their development.

## It is all about recognizing and developing potential.

As Cimino says, “I’ve found that leadership is not something you can designate or anoint. Leadership is about the willingness of individuals to want to step up, take responsibility, become accountable, accept risk and move forward.”

That is not to say that leaders always have all the answers. But we have to keep asking. And coming up with the right questions: of ourselves and of others.

And it is also realizing that those questions are different from the ones we learned about in school. As students, many of us were taught that we are supposed to have the right answers. When you move into leadership, however, that is really not the case. In fact, sometimes one of the biggest derailers for us as leaders is thinking that we have to have all the answers. The concern is that we will be tempted to stick with our own ideas, whether they are working or not. We have to make sure that we don’t get caught up in defending our own ideas because we want to make sure that we are right and that people will look up to us.

Instead, the most able and successful leaders we have come across are those who collaborate most. They make sure that they are developing the people around them to be innovative, to be thoughtful, and to be looking out for the success of the organization. They work on concerns together. Probably the greatest thing a leader can learn is to ask insightful, thoughtful questions that cause reflection and deep thinking by others. That’s how they create an environment where ideas are generated and innovation thrives.

No one person can in today’s climate can have all the right answers. That is an unrealistic expectation to have of ourselves as managers and leaders. What the best of us do, whether we are managing a project or leading an organization, is to challenge those who we surround ourselves with to be part of the process and part of the solution. That’s when we can see our own impact on the success of the organization. That keeps people wanting to stay there. It makes them feel loyal and devoted to the organization because they know that they have a real and meaningful impact on the success of the organization.

As managers and leaders, our most important challenge is to identify and develop our own potential. Everything else grows from there.

Patrick Sweeney is the President and Herb Greenberg is the CEO of Caliper, a Princeton-based international management consulting firm, which, throughout the past 50 years, has helped over 25,000 companies, from Fortune 500 to start-ups and everything in between, hire and develop top performers. For more information on Caliper, visit [www.calipercorp.com](http://www.calipercorp.com).

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