

Superintendent skills

By Ronald C. Frame



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two years. He has consulted directly for a wide variety of firms and was with the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Director of Human Resource Management and lecturer in health administration. He has authored a management manual for GCSAA, and has authored or co-authored various professional journals in the hospital and banking field.

Leadership and Management: Partners to Misunderstanding

Lean back, relax, close your eyes and think: Leader, Leadership, To Lead. We can conjure up a mental, fantasy picture of A Leader. Think about it. Remnants of strong childhood impressions quickly come together to form a familiar image of strength, a friendly honest smile, clear piercing eyes, lean features, a voice conveying truth, dignity, right, trust and respect; a combination of the Lone Ranger, John Wayne and Winston Churchill.

The image is quickly there, an old friend, almost itself a statement of leadership, born early, added to and solidified by the growing-up exposures in family, Scouting, church, school. It is an easy, comfortable, dependable image — Leader. I always wanted to be one.

Now shake that image loose, close it out, lean back again, relax and think. Manager, Management, To Manage. Hmm. Try again. Management. From the shadowy corridors of the mind comes — nothing, no fantasy-based statement, no basis for — gee, I always wanted to be one.

The concept of leadership is strong in our minds with roots that go back deeply into our youth. It is difficult to find the same familiarity with the con-

cept of management. Management is a more recently introduced item to the well of our understanding.

Indeed, many practicing managers speak management, but think leadership. When asked for a definition of the difference between the terms, they are most often felt to be largely synonymous.

If the terms, manager and leader, have similar meanings, then why the red flag, Partners to Misunderstanding?

The Golf Course Superintendent is a position of management. His resources are people and things; his responsibilities are reflected in the condition of an acreage set aside for the play of golf. His failures and successes are wrapped up in the manner with which he combines the utilization of those resources to get the job done.

His preparation for the management role is largely technical, broad segments of knowledge about things and processes. His most frequent recurring source of headaches is often not things and processes, but people. What then, is the most accessible aspirin, leadership or management?

Leadership is a gift, a combination of inherited personality characteristics, developed, either early or late, in growing-up social experiences and tested in day-to-day relationships with peers. There are degrees of strength of leadership characteristics.

Society has always extolled leadership. The imagery born out of names like Alexander The Great, Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln, John Kennedy are of John Wayne proportions and Clark Kent strengths. Leadership is something we want to have because we know it is good. Yet, the sports page tells us, "You can't make them, you can't appoint them, you can't thrust it upon them. Leaders are naturals."

Management, on the other hand, is a combination of acquired pragmatic skills, developed and tested through work experiences, and used in terms of the goals set for the position. The Golf Course Superintendent uses the tools of management to get things done through **people** (human resources) utilizing things (physical resources) available to him. Management skills **can only** be learned. Genes have little

to do with that ability except in areas of integrity, intelligence, energy, sensitivity and a myriad of other like conditions. Management is a job one learns. Leadership is something one has. Leaders must learn to manage, manager's can only learn to **act** like leaders.

The dangers implied by the title of this piece are inherent to one's understanding of the differences in the two concepts.

The Golf Course Superintendent who views the terms as meaning the same thing, but lacks a leadership self-image, is also likely to be uncomfortable and perhaps awkward and ineffective in the management role.

Definitions of leadership say little about authority, responsibility, accountability, control, organizational direction, planning and related considerations. Definitions of management say little else. A 44-year-old president and chief executive officer of a Fortune 500 company, who did it the hard way, when asked "How," responded, "It turned around for me when I learned the difference between management and leadership. Of the two, I chose the only route available to me. Now, I manage the leaders."

The typical Golf Course Superintendent, because of his technical training and a natural inclination towards hands-on doing, has difficulty really seeing his role as truly that of management. If he further encumbers himself with a leadership interpretation of management when he knows he lacks "natural" leadership characteristics, he finds himself dealing with crisis, reacting rather than acting, fighting brushfires rather than eliminating their source, operating on an impulse "Heroic" level rather than on a rational plane.

Management is work, a planned effort of getting one foot in front of another, a scheduled stream of activity to reach the goals that are required as part of the package. Solid leadership traits can be a bonus to this role, kept in perspective, but the superior effect is gained by a rational understanding of what you are, teamed with knowledge of management tools and applied to those critical human resources.