

What Makes a Great Leader vs. a Great Manager? Here's Why You Need to Understand the Difference.

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Would you rather be a leading visionary for your company but have disorganized management, or have structured systems with a productive team but no time to drive innovation for your business? Do you have to choose between the two?

As a business owner for the last decade, I have learned there is a huge difference between being a strong leader and being a disciplined manager. Not understanding the difference can cost you your team or business.

A strong leader doesn't automatically make a strong manager

Great leaders being bad managers is not a new concept. But if you are an entrepreneur who is struggling with the talent management aspect of running your business, it's important to recognize your blind spots. Annmarie Neal, the founder of the Center for Leadership Innovation with 20 years of global experience in leading organizations, says in her book, *Leading From the Edge*, "A leader is somebody who sees opportunity and puts change in motion. A manager is somebody who follows that leader and sees how to structure things to create value for the company." She even goes on to say that in her experience, she "found that the best leaders weren't really good

managers.”

This checks out. Sometimes the characteristics that make you such a great visionary for your company, such as being innovative and taking risks, inherently contradict the role of a good manager, who thrives from structure and consistency. Neal says, “The vast majority of business leaders struggle to make the transition because they do not recognize the necessity for change.” Even great leaders might not recognize that past performance does not guarantee future results.

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Know your blind spots

There’s a reason why commercial airliners require two pilots on board during a flight. While I am not operating a commercial jet, I am running a growing business, and assigning roles is not only in *my* best interest but also for “everyone on board.”

Recognizing my managerial limitations, I brought on my wife and co-pilot of choice, Ruth Fernandez.

Ruth has a unique talent as a corporate strategist and specializes in building robust infrastructures for businesses. Before joining our company, she held management and accounting positions in various industries and went on to found a nationwide notary service company that employed over 400 notaries and 120 contract attorneys. Currently, she serves as our Chief Operating Officer, overseeing the Human Resources and Office Management departments. Her professional expertise, as well as her time as a stay-at-home mother to my children, have made her a natural in managing people and structures. Needless to say, her joining our firm marked a significant shift in our operations, driving revenue growth of 422% in under two years.

Scale and shift your business for longevity and growth

I've noticed that achieving holistically balanced operations is twofold: extrinsic vs. intrinsic.

Great *leaders* tend to look outwards. I am always thinking about our products, competitors and what our next big move is going to be. Great *managers* tend to look inward. Ruth understands that we are only as successful collectively as our team is individually. She thinks about our structures, practices, procedures and how to leverage our team's strengths to achieve company goals.

Scaling your business with the right management team also requires continuous learning. I attend monthly meetings with CEOs looking to network with other seasoned advisors and management consultants. While there is value in the idea of being "old school," it is impossible to stay ahead of the curve without having an open mind. It's crucial to look at others' operations, analyze market trends and change with the times so you don't get left behind.

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As a business owner, I think we tend to be hard on ourselves about having perfect command of the skills for being both a leader and manager. But the reality is, they're different skill sets – leaders drive growth, and managers scale systems. Understanding how to bring harmony between the two is crucial to sustaining the success of your business and everyone on board.

Best of luck!

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