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While it's hard to describe, we certainly recognize leadership when we see it. The way we're going, though, we may not get to see enough of it in the future.

As industry takes on new challenges in a 'dot-com' world, where information is not only king, but immediate, it also is retiring an invaluable babyboomer generation of corporate and company leaders—leaving us with a seemingly weak 'bullpen' to close the game. Since many of our 21st century "wunderkids" who have been educated in management may bring only a meager amount of leadership experience to their jobs, we can't help but ask who is leading the parade?

Prudence would dictate that the leadership and management principles of corporations and businesses would alter to keep enterprises alive and viable. However, with the current dilemma presented by the juxtaposition of management skills and leadership qualities, today's technical professionals might be ill-prepared for the duties of the day.

What is remarkable is the extensive level of coursework and corporate training available and dedicated to building the hard managerial skills with a comparative dearth of opportunities to find, build upon and eventually transform those engaged in a technical field into the leaders of tomorrow. Leadership and management instructions may be but five feet apart on the shelves of a bookstore, yet in the real world, they are miles apart from both practical and academic points of view.

Although MBA schools are graduating the next generation of corporate directors at a dizzying pace, with the rapid speed of technological changes throughout industry, engineers and technology-minded professionals might soon be called to the top of corporate ladders. Their understanding of the function and 'workability' of maintenance, logistics and engineering-based technologies could very well trump the bottom-line minded "suits" in business colleges.

Marching forward

The charge has never been greater. Maintenance managers, plant engineers and front-line supervisors have been handed the challenge of—and literally mandated—to bring about sweeping change in our organizations in regard to people, systems and equipment care. To do this, what weapon of capability and understanding do they arm themselves with? There is, after all, a fundamental difference in the talents of managing and leading.

Historically, companies have managed to the bottom line. Likewise, the evolution of many successful companies materialized through the charm and champion-like leadership style of charismatic entrepreneurs. Success on the heels of hard-charging and 'devil may care' effervescence of some leaders, compared to the quid pro quo drumbeat of managing to the bottom line, reveal a stark contrast to the differing talents as explained by Rear Admiral Grace Murray Hooper, in that "you manage things, you lead people."

Clearly, we have become extremely good at training and educating ourselves to manage things. In the process, despite the fact that "a successful outcome is more dependent on effective leadership than efficient management," we also have become quite good at managing people. On the other hand, how good are we at developing leaders today?

The hypothesis that most American companies and corporations are headed by management MBA-types might not be far off the mark. In most instances, there is a predominance of a leadership corps with little or no formal leadership development. Can we expect the new century of corporations headed by technocrats to have even more learned leadership at the helm? Do you need proof for this hypothesis? How else can we explain the meteoric rise of leadership books from Welch to Maxwell to Giuliani, written as if they personally invented leadership? Can we assume they didn't learn these traits in college?

Inspiring action

Here's a reality check: Is your boss or your boss' boss a good leader or a good manager? Do you know the difference? Most people don't.

Although it is not necessary to display actual "Pattonesque" qualities to be admired as a great leader, General George S. Patton certainly was revered for his leadership swagger more than his management style. In combat, it seems that you would want the officer in charge to be a great leader and the supply sergeant to be a good manager. Incontrovertibly, General MacArthur's farewell address to the cadets of West Point, relaying his sentiment that "the long gray line has never failed us," was reminiscent of a school whose tradition was one of great

leadership—not great management.

But, are we in combat? Which industry in America is not battling $3-per-day labor from overseas? Which overseas company is not competing for resources that grow scarcer each day? The call to arms today requires the forging and bluing of real leaders to take us to the next horizon. We can't expect to be managed into the future!

There can be little doubt that the overall successes of an organization, a venture or even a project require the coordinated efforts of both managers and leaders. What is troubling is that we've created a top-culture where managing to the bottom line is paramount to ingenuity and good old fashioned trial and error. Leaders entice action and exhibit patterns of inspiration and entrepreneurial spirit. Sir Edmund Hillary, upon his return from the summit of Mt. Everest, exclaimed, "Well, we knocked the bastard off!" That's inspiration in action!

Lining up

It is apparent from abstract research that management principles are 'hard' skills and fairly understandable, in contrast to leadership qualities that are 'soft' and require a different aptitude for development. Acquiring these skills/ gaining these qualities actually starts in school and involves a regimen of both explicit and tacit learning.

Through academic maturation, our technical schools need to develop course curricula which include vehicles for students to study and develop their leadership potential; courses such as critical thinking and public speaking. In addition to the textbook learning, there is a developmental necessity to apply hands-on practical leadership fundamentals.

Dale Blann, CEO of Marshall Institute, contends that explicit knowledge is what we can all read about, but tacit knowledge is what 'you' bring to the table. "The difference," he says, "between companies that do maintenance well, and those that do maintenance really, really well is leadership."

How different is the education of our corporate professionals, especially those in technical fields? After graduation, many have a rudimentary grasp of technical concepts and practices, but little (if any) of the nuances of life outside the classroom. Cooperative programs come the closest to teaching and providing fertile ground to grow leadership buds, but seldom are co-op

students in a position to do great things—or more importantly, great damage.

Several, if not most, traits exhibited by leaders and managers fall into a gray area, one that could be considered either-or. This gray area is open for interpretation when it comes to foundational development. Would communication skills be considered a management must, or a leadership gift? Could one consider timeliness and organization as the signs of a good manager or an efficient leader?

Recognizing leadership

It should come as no surprise to any professional that to truly ingrain an idea and a behavior into a person, the process of teaching must involve both learning and doing. Why would this function of growth differ when teaching someone to be a leader?

Aside from the nature vs. nurture argument that asks "are leaders born or, are leaders created of the moment," the fundamental essence of what makes a leader is not necessarily exact. Describing what leadership is might seem difficult; not unlike Justice Potter Stewart concurring in Jacobellis v. Ohio, when he confessed that he couldn't describe obscenity, but "I know it when I see it." Leadership is hard to describe, but we know it when we see it.

There is a certain amalgamation between the expression of management and leadership functions. This mixture manifests itself in an academic and practical sense to favor management over leadership. The danger with this position—and it is one that can seep into organizations without notice—is that as personnel climb corporate ladders, they fulfill their newest positions in the organizational chart with superior management aptitude, but very little leadership prowess.

Management is in fact 'managing' something that already exists. A manager's day is filled with aligning the business to corporate strategies, monitoring finances; essentially, managing the status quo. The very antithesis of accepting the status quo is leadership. Leadership is vision, excitement, creation, humility—and passion.

Relating to the central thesis of this topic, an individual's role in society and business may take on a leadership and/or a management center. The historic basis of teaching and growth in an organization is geared more toward managing, maintaining a status-quo, with little fanfare of

opportunity for leadership development. One day the pendulum will swing, and leadership will be the operating grace for technical-based and trained corporate heads.

Filling the gap

The gap between the current-state of leadership capabilities and the future-state requirements is even more evident in technical fields where students and young professionals are invested in learning the rapid degree of core information that comes at them, in an effort to keep pace with the changing times. Often, if successful in their primary roles, these same individuals are elevated to levels of higher responsibility, having never been given a single rudimentary exercise in leadership.

The maturation of leadership abilities might begin in a classroom, but they most certainly are recognized when given an opportunity to be exercised. Corporate core competencies should establish a vision to include skilled and effective leadership as weapons in their arsenal. As this leadership staff grows, in fact, during their formative years, their exposure to leadership doctrine needs to become part of the daily routine.

Leaders are humble and respectfully thankful for their positions in life. Leaders exhibit, in principle and in practice, the characteristics of integrity, compassion, courage, commitment, confidence and communication. Currently these characteristics are not mainstay curriculum at most major universities. Young technical professionals could ensure an invaluable spot on their resumes by gaining these traits in any initial job assignment. This is a challenge to accept the less glamorous jobs, those that test leadership abilities. These traits can only be honed through growth and opportunity from education and work ethic. What opportunities are available at your facility for you to grow these skills?

Marching orders

The challenge today is clear. Young engineers and those in technical fields should seek out and participate in courses, projects, and extra-curricular activities that strengthen their leadership potential. Corporate and plant leaders must recognize that their future depends on the leadership savvy of their young professionals.

The crux of the argument is the head-to-head comparison of management skills vs. leadership traits. A reasonable assertion could be made that the difference between the two is infinitesimal and different situations would bring into play the different principles. A counter to that argument is simple acceptance of the relevant fact that if management or leadership abilities are not

taught and developed, they cannot be brought to bear. Each has its time, and there is an art to recognizing the need to evolve. There exists today a new paradigm, one that favors leadership over management. Leadership and management are complementary; they co-exist for the benefit of the organization.

We must, however, tip the balance of the scale. This truly is our call to action. Again, as we march forward, think about who really is leading this parade. Could it be you? Should it be you? **MT**

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