

The Evolution of Management to Leader

In many workplace conversations, the term manager and leader seem to be used interchangeably. This, however, should not be the case.

In a traditional sense, management involves having the ability to have others complete tasks (Fagiano, 1997, p.2). By delegating tasks to subordinates and supervising their completion exhibits the application of a manager's power. Fagiano (1997) explained this system through the personification of an octopus (p.2). He goes on to explain how a manager is the central brain of an octopus and the subordinates are the tentacles that carry out the duties delegated by the central brain (Fagiano, 1997, p.2). This is an ineffective, outdated method of management that does not allow for those beneath the manager to contribute to the team's progression other than what they are told to carry out. This inefficiency also pulls from the effectiveness of the manager to make overarching decisions.

Harvard Business Review states that a major issue plaguing a manager's transition into leadership is the effectiveness with which they shift from a specialist position to generalist position (Watkins, 2019, p.5). This issue mainly stems from the fact that managers are taken out of their specialized comfort zone and exposed to many others. Take, for example, the transition of a director of a warehouse operations to a general manager for a business. They have specific- specialist- knowledge that allowed them to make well informed decisions for their department. Unfortunately, when this specialist becomes a general manager they no longer devote all of their time to a single

part of operations but their decisions affect all other departments in a general sense. Now they must oversee departments such as sales, marketing, customer service, transportation, and others which they most likely have limited knowledge of. In circumstances such as these, the transitioning manager is likely to micromanage the functional comfort zone (department) they are most experienced in overseeing (Watkins, 2019, p.6). This can cause contention between departments as some receive less attention and decision-making power than others because of possible favoritism (Watkins, 2019, p.6). To avoid some of these major issues it is crucial that businesses have evolved from the traditional mindset of management to that of a leader.

Contemporary leadership also involves directing subordinates but places immense emphasis on the dispersing of knowledge. Old-fashion management tactics associate knowledge to power in a direct correlation pattern. Therefore, antiquated management believed that managers that withheld information for themselves were essentially keeping subordinates from functioning independently and thus continue on to diminish the power of the central head. In direct opposition to this ideal is contemporary management. This strategy effectively asserts that the sharing of knowledge allows for subordinates to support the manager consequently elevating the team as a whole. Fagiano (1997) uses the example of a flock of birds migrating south to personify that of a group under a manager (p.4-5). As per Fagiano's (1997) example, the leader of the migration takes point and spearheads things like direction and breaking wind resistance (p.4-5). As one could imagine this would tire the point leader. Now, if the old- fashion management tactic is still intact, when the leader tires the whole flock

would have to ground and wait until the leader is able to take up the front position again (Fagiano, 1997, p.5). This is quite inefficient for the flock and would cause frequent stops in the progression toward their goal. However, through the contemporary method of sharing information, the leader is able to fall back and rest on a draft wind while another member of the team take up the lead position for a brief period because they have the knowledge the leader had concerning direction and breaking wind resistance patterns (Fagiano, 1997, p.5). This accelerates the flock's progression south and allows them to accomplish their goal far ahead of other, less evolved flocks.

So how does this personification relate to our example of a director becoming a general manager? Simply put, if the newly appointed general manager operated on the old- fashion management method, not only did they stunt the ability of their replacement by not sharing information but they are also potentially going to stunt other departments by withholding information. If the general manager were to prioritize transparency of knowledge they would have better prepared subordinates to promote to replacement positions and would gain the trust of other department heads that they would likely interface with given their new position. This transparency would also foster a trusting relationship that allows for open communication between the flock and the leader that will fundamentally prepare the flock for success in future endeavors.

References:

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