

Leadership and management myths



There seems to be a big myth that says, “being a leader is all about leadership and being a manager is all about management”.

I often hear people say, “I’ll tell you what leadership is all about; leaders inspire, motivate, encourage others”

Or, alternatively, “I’ll tell you what management is all about; managers plan, organise, structure work”

Managers and leaders are people, management and leadership are acts; acts of management or acts of leadership. You can’t define leadership by talking about leaders and you can’t define management by talking about managers.

Many people think that being a leader is all about being noble & ethical and influencing, energising and enthusing people whereas being a manager is more about mundane things such as telling people what to do, measuring progress and verifying work.

Images of managers “bossing” people around and leaders “empowering” people abound on LinkedIn and elsewhere.

Someone who is being pushy, micromanaging, deciding autocratically, criticising people is engaging neither in leadership nor management.

The vast majority of people I come across in business are managers (group, project, department, business, senior, etc.)

and they manage teams of people who are expected to “get stuff done”.

Very few people have the title “leader” in business organisations, but that doesn’t stop anyone incarnating their leadership.

Leaders are not better than managers; both are people and at the end of the day, a title is what you make of it. You may be the manager of an operational team working on highly technical work package in your area of technical expertise or you may be a manager of a transversal team working on strategic orientations for which you are far from the expert – in both cases you will need some structure and organisation in order for your motivated, enthusiastic and willing people to get a result.

Managers need both a leadership ability and a management ability.

Leadership is not better or preferable to management, we need both; leadership without management can lead to broken promises and management without leadership can lead to turning in circles.

In my day-to-day work I interact with managers at all levels of organisations; there are those, at all levels, that are great at management and there are those that are great at leadership, and then there are those that are great at both management & leadership – I’ll leave you to imagine, in general, those that make a real difference with their teams.