

Do You Want to be “Managed”?

In leadership, we need to change our behavior first if we expect our employees to change their behavior. There's a *huge* difference between managers and leaders, but unfortunately the majority of the people I see in supervisory roles in the world today tend to be managers. Managers are number-makers and leaders are people-makers. Managers tend to be short-term thinkers and leaders are long-term thinkers. Managers are reactive to situations while leaders are more proactive. Managers think they have all the answers, while leaders have great questions. Managers are prone to want to control people, while leaders like to empower people. Managers like to maintain the status quo and keep things the way they are and leaders embrace change and like to invent a new future.

We have created managers because we take employees who are really good at their duties and we want to show them our appreciation, so we promote them up to a management role. Then we teach them how to manage keys, how to manage inventory, how to manage payroll, how to manage supplies, and how to manage this and that. What we end up with are managers instead of leaders. We don't have people who have been taught how to inspire and motivate people.

If you think about the word itself, the question comes to mind: does anyone want to be “managed”? Of course not! And nobody I know wants to be “bossed.” However, we use the word “manager” and we use the word “boss” frequently. These are probably two of our most common terms for supervisors, even though they can be perceived negatively.

Another disservice we do to those we promote into management roles is that we give them roles they are not prepared to handle—they've usually had no leadership training at all. This is really sad because we are throwing them into the fire and asking them to perform these duties before we've given them any training for their role as leaders.

Specific leadership training and proactive development for the up and comers is absolutely critical to organizations, but most organizations just don't do it. I wish that organizations would spend more time filling up the pipeline with employees who have stepped forward and said, “You know what, I'm interested in becoming a leader someday.” We need to find these people and begin to develop them early on so that when we do have a position open up, we can look into our pipeline and see those who have embraced the leadership role the most and have exhibited those kinds of behaviors. When we move them into the role, they are already trained and ready to go. But that truly doesn't happen out there in the real world very often.

This is further supported by a survey I did of my monthly newsletter readers in August of 2006. These people represent many different industries throughout the world. I asked them this question: “Does your organization have a formal leadership development program in place to create great leaders?” The response was 13 percent said “Yes” and 87 percent said “No.”