

between your words and your actions. It is probably best to say as little as necessary about your own management style and let your actions convey your style. In other words, instead of telling them what you are, let your actions show them.

OUTMODED VIEWS

In addition to harboring erroneous assumptions about people, many managers cling to outmoded notions of how a manager should behave. They see, with all good intentions, the leader as being a "boss"—the essential giver of orders: "I'm the boss. I'm paid to make decisions and I'm responsible for the results of those decisions, so I will make those decisions." In brief, some managers see participative leadership as "passing the buck" or "spreading the blame" and in general view participative leadership as a shirking of responsibilities.

However, participative leadership is anything but abrogation of responsibility. Although you can parcel out some of your management authority and spread it among a number of employees, you remain responsible for the decisions and actions of your employees. In remaining responsible for the decisions of the group, the true participative leader is displaying considerably more courage than the autocrat who simply decides and gives orders. To trust your employees with a share of your authority while you retain full responsibility is a sign of strength, not a sign of weakness.

Another outmoded view of leadership is reflected in the belief that the leader should always know best, that employees look to the leader to "tell them how to do it." The true function of the leader is to help the employees find the best way to do it themselves. The leader does not take up a position at the rear of the pack and shove. Neither does the leader move in front of the crew and urge them to follow. Rather, the leader is somewhere in the pack—a facilitator, a remover of obstacles, and in general a catalytic agent that causes the entire group to move forward in the proper direction. The true leader is not the master of a department but rather its busiest, most responsible servant.

LEADERSHIP'S PRIMARY CHARACTERISTIC

Many attempts have been made to create detailed listings of qualities that characterize leaders. It is done all the time; lists are generated that include standard noble but intangible characteristics such as honesty, integrity, and initiative, and slightly more measurable criteria such as academic qualifications. However, there is not a characteristic to be named that we cannot find completely lacking in some supposedly successful leaders. In short, you cannot make a list, even a brief list, and truly say that a leader must have these characteristics.

Is there anything that always truly defines a leader? A leader is certainly not defined by organizational appointment or by the simple conferring of a management title. A title may describe a position but not a person; a great many so-called leadership positions are occupied by people who are anything but leaders in the true sense of the word.

The single factor that defines or characterizes a true leader is *the acceptance by the followers*. This means acceptance of the individual as a leader, not

simply obedience to the position the individual occupies. Obedience, although it may be grudging, will often be extended to the position because of the authority of the position itself. However, willing obedience will be extended consistently only by those employees who have accepted the supervisor's leadership.

Acceptance by one's followers cannot be mandated; it must be earned. Without this acceptance, a supervisor is a manager in title only and a leader not at all.

WORD PLAY: LEADERSHIP VERSUS MANAGEMENT

Leadership attracted much attention and acquired newer shades of meaning in the total quality management (TQM) movement. As empowerment is "in" and delegation attracts little concern, so is leadership "in" at present. Many concerned with the quality movement speak of the need for "not management, but leadership."

With this highly positive connotation placed on the word leadership, we are left with an eroded connotation of management, conveying the impression that somehow mere management does not measure up to leadership. However, management and leadership remain two words that are generally synonymous and freely interchangeable in many uses.

As suggested previously, someone can be a manager—or supervisor, director, coordinator, administrator, chief executive officer, or whatever—in title without being a true leader. However, this in no way renders management as a whole anything less than, nor anything significantly different from, leadership. There is poor management and there is good management; there is poor leadership and there is good leadership. One can be a manager in title without being a leader, but in terms of function one cannot manage without leading and cannot lead without managing. Good leadership and good management go together, as do poor leadership and poor management.

We frequently hear management described as both art and science. We might say the same about leadership, but we are usually ready to consider leadership more as art. Leadership is more likely to inspire thoughts of the human element, whereas management conjures up images of "techniques" and "tools." Whether we are speaking of management or leadership, however, we are dealing with the process of accomplishing goals through the efforts of people. Only so much of this process can be quantified and reduced to rules and techniques: the remainder will come from the heart and the gut. Whether it is called leadership or management, it is this unquantifiable, frequently elusive "soft" side that puts the word "good" or another adjective in front of management or leadership. And leadership and management cannot be justly compared without the use of qualifying adjectives.

CAN YOU LEAD "BY THE BOOK"?

If we accept the contention that good leadership (or good management) is both art and science, we can perhaps reason that leading or managing "by the book" is only partially possible. However, one of the errors commonly committed by struggling leaders is overreliance on what we might refer to as cookie-cutter management. Cookie-cutter management is what occurs when we

attempt to apply specifically named management techniques or kinds of management often cynically described as “flavors of the month.”

Think of what occurs when you roll out a batch of cookie dough and apply a cookie cutter. You obtain a desired shape, but you also get leftover material. Even if you roll out the leftover dough and cut another time or two, you are still left with a remaining lump of dough that fails to fit the required shape. Whenever effort is applied to produce a desired shape from some form of input, some of the material—but not all of it—is squeezed into the desired shape. Like the dough left outside of the cookie cutter, the extra material that falls away during the shaping process is ignored, for all practical purposes lost to consideration. This is what occurs when we attempt to apply “formula” management.

It is reasonable for us to seek order in our work. However, we tend at times to look beyond simple order and seek formula approaches, recipes for doing this or that task or handling particular kinds of problems. However, management’s problems cannot be consistently and adequately addressed by processes that by their very nature attempt to force issues into certain configurations.

Cookie-cutter management is especially prevalent in management literature. A number of management authors have named their own approaches to management using labels that each fervently hopes will catch on and become the next flavor of the month. This sells books, attracts speaking engagements, and enhances an author’s value as a consultant.

Consider, for example, the “excellence” movement inspired by *In Search of Excellence* by Peters and Waterman.² Although this extremely enlightening book did not itself espouse a cookie-cutter approach to management, the concepts it advanced were taken up by others who did exactly that—created many cookie-cutter approaches as they attempted to formalize and proceduralize these concepts into “excellence programs.” Much the same happened years earlier with management by objectives (MBO). The entire MBO concept sprang from a single chapter of an excellent book written by Peter F. Drucker in the 1950s.³ As presented by Drucker, MBO was largely honesty and common sense; it was not the periodic exercise with forms and notebooks that it became for so many managers. Drucker himself even cautioned against allowing such a process to become a paper mill, yet many of those who picked up on his work and ran with it turned it into one of the biggest wastes of time and paper with which managers have ever had to contend.

We have likewise been offered cookie-cutter approaches in the forms of quality circles and many of the permutations of the principles of TQM. There also have been many less notable approaches that have come and gone as successive authors have attempted to originate the next flavor of the month or to be the one to launch the next MBO or TQM.

The good news about cookie cutters is that they all include concepts of potential value to managers at all levels. The bad news is that none of the cookie cutters includes everything that a manager might need to know because by its very nature the cookie cutter always leaves some material outside. Also, none of the cookie cutters can instill in the individual the qualities and characteristics of a successful leader. Common sense, honesty, integrity, insight, pride, enthusiasm, and the belief in every employee’s value and potential

contribution cannot be dictated by procedure; these qualities are among the elements that fuel the art of leadership. If they are not there in sufficient quantity to inspire people to follow willingly, the best that can ever be obtained from the latest cookie-cutter approach is a brief burst of success—perhaps real, perhaps only perceived—to be washed away in a returning tide of cynicism. You cannot lead or manage by the book; the book provides only the science, but the art springs from the capabilities and actions of the individual manager.

AN EMPLOYEE'S VIEW

Not all the employees in a department will view the supervisor in the same light or develop the same impression of the supervisor as a leader. Each of your employees will experience your leadership "style" in bits and pieces that add up to a total impression. As long as you are convinced you are doing the best job you know how to do, there is little to be gained from worrying about the opinions your employees hold of you. However, it pays to remember that your view of yourself as a leader is rarely the same as the view of you that your employees hold. What you see as your strengths may not be seen as strong points by your employees. Conversely, what your employees see as your strong points may not even have occurred to you as significant characteristics of your style. There are several aspects of supervisory performance that are likely to influence your employees' assessment of you. Your employees may not use the same terms we use to describe these aspects of performance, and neither may they use labels such as "autocratic," "authoritarian," or "participative." However, the view your employees form of you is usually related to the way you come across in regard to some or all of the following:

- Do you communicate openly, sharing all necessary or helpful information with the employee group? Openness to communication is associated more with consultative or participative leadership, and a closed communication posture is associated more with autocratic leadership.
- Do you display awareness of people's problems and needs? The participative leader tends more toward awareness of individual problems whereas the autocratic leader often appears unaware or even uncaring.
- Do you display trust and confidence in employees? The autocratic leader displays little trust or confidence, relying mostly on close supervision. The true participative leader is able to extend trust and confidence.
- What means do you use to motivate employees? The autocratic leader frequently relies on fear and punishment to move people forward. The participative leader motivates through involvement and reward whenever possible.
- Do you provide support to employees? The employees of the autocratic leader often find they stand alone when things go wrong and they need the supervisor's backing. Support for employees and their decisions and actions is a hallmark of the participative leader.
- Do you request input on job problems? The autocratic leader tends to go it alone, but the consultative or participative leader is generally open to input from the work group.

THE VISIBLE SUPERVISOR

To provide true leadership to the work group, the supervisor must be seen as an integral part of the work unit and must in fact be such a part of the work unit. To get things done effectively through employees, as supervisor you should: (1) be visible and available, spending most of your time where you are really needed; (2) show concern for the employees' problems; (3) maintain a true open-door attitude so that your employees can always reach you when they need you; and (4) rely on immediate feedback to let all of your employees know exactly where they stand. Much of true leadership is provided by visible example, and the more visible you are to your employees, the greater the chance of your gaining their acceptance.

LEADING BY DEFAULT

The supervisor who is frequently neither visible nor available is often put in a position of "leading" by default. When the supervisor cannot be found or does not act, different employees will proceed—or not proceed, as the case may be—in different ways. In the absence of direction some employees will bite the bullet and use their own best judgment in taking action. Some, however, will do nothing and allow events to follow their normal course, which may lead just as easily to disaster as to inconsequential results.

The majority of defaults occur because allowing them is the supervisor's path of least resistance. Because one soon discovers that default is frequently neutral and occasionally even helpful, there often develops a temptation to just let things go until they resolve themselves. Given the crush of activities many supervisors are regularly drawn into, it can be extremely tempting to sometimes let events follow their own course.

However, default management will not long be seen as representative of real leadership. Your employees should, of course, be encouraged to work independently as much as reasonable under the circumstances, but it is important for them to know that you are readily available when needed and that you will not default on them.

TRUE LEADERSHIP

It has already been mentioned that in the last analysis the only factor that truly defines a leader is the acceptance of that person's leadership by the followers. It has been further suggested that a style that leans toward participative leadership is more likely to be acceptable by the majority of today's workers than a style that leans toward autocratic behavior. However, no single pattern of leadership behavior is appropriate to all situations at all times. If your employees are largely healthcare professionals and paraprofessionals you may lean toward participative leadership most of the time. However, there still may be times when the situation calls for autocratic behavior—you need to be able to make a decision, issue an order, and expect results. Also, there may be times when bureaucratic behavior in the form of strict interpretation and application of the rules and regulations may be required. True leadership is flexible; it responds to both individual and organizational needs and is shaped to fit the needs of the moment.