

# The Four V's of Leadership

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## Introduction

In today's organizational climate it makes sense to focus on what is meant by leadership and management. "Leader" is a title an individual may have. It may connote someone who practices leadership or it may merely connote the head person of a group, regardless of the functions and role he or she performs. In other words, leader and leadership do not necessarily reflect the same thing. Leader is a title – meaning either someone in charge, or someone doing leadership, or both. Leadership is an action, a phenomenon, a relationship, and is not necessarily related to position.

Manager is perhaps more straightforward. A manager holds a position of authority and because of that hierarchical status can do some things in an organization that others (non-managers) cannot do. Doing the stuff of management is the qualifier for who may be a manager. In this sense, headship is a part of how we define management. Mere headship, however, is not *ipso facto* leadership. So, often we find ourselves confused as to what to call

Mere headship is not *ipso facto* leadership...

someone – leader or manager or both – and even more confused when we try to figure out what we mean by those terms.

Nirenberg's (1998) study of organizational behavior textbooks reviewed how leadership is discussed in the literature and taught in schools. He concludes that "leadership, as

presented in the selected texts, is a collection of control theories that ignores essential aspects of the leadership concept. Furthermore, these texts imply that leadership is achieved by being promoted into a supervisory role (p. 84). He goes on to suggest

that the definition of leadership itself has been undergoing a transformational shift unrecorded in the texts. Leadership, according to the texts, like the concept of management, has been thought to mean the act of getting things done with and through people, albeit in a kinder, gentler way. Typically, the authors simply say it is the process of influencing others. Nelson and Quick, for example, define leadership as 'The process of guiding and directing the behavior of people in the work environment.' ...*Manager could replace leader in this definition without losing any meaning* (p. 84, emphasis added).

Nirenberg offers that the notion of leadership is changing dramatically. Whereas position was the predictable domain of management, relationship becomes the distinct realm of leadership.

Again, headship (meaning positional authority) is not necessarily leadership, although much of the literature assumes it is. Differentiating between the structure of headship and the philosophy of leadership allows

leadership to be distilled throughout the organization, developing individuals into leaders in their own right. Leadership is the art of influencing people to accomplish organizational goals, while management is the science of specifying and implementing means needed to accomplish the goals. In a sense, the pure leader is a philosopher; the pure manager a technologist (see Fairholm, 1991).

Baruch (1998) makes this distinction in research to explore how studies directed in the phenomenon of leadership are focusing on actual leadership cases or whether they rather focus on another phenomenon – appointmentship:

There is a significant difference between the two. Appointmentship is a case where a person is granted, through an external authority, certain power and responsibilities over other people. The emergence of leadership, however, is concerned with inner processes, where people recognize and are ready and willing to be influenced by a person. As results, it is not simple, and perhaps even misleading to draw an analogy from one phenomenon to the other. *Even worse is ignoring the difference and referring to one phenomenon as if it was actually the other* (p. 101, emphasis added).

A description of leadership, then, must distinguish leadership from management. Once again, this does not mean that one person cannot be both. Just as quantum physics teaches us that light is both a particle and a wave but never both at the same time, one individual may do management *and* do leadership. As the characteristics of particle light are distinct from the nature of wave light, so are the characteristics, perspectives, and values set of management distinct from those of

leadership. The two are complimentary, but not the same.

### **Distinguishing Leadership and Management**

The question now is what does "doing leadership" mean in the world of complex organizations.

Academics and authors have debated the difference

between management and leadership over the past 30 years. Zaleznik (1977) was one of the first to distinguish between management and leadership. He believed that managers are concerned about how things get done, and leaders are concerned with what those things mean to people. He noted that "managers tend to view work as an enabling process involving some combination of people and ideas interacting to establish strategy and make decisions," and "...where managers act to limit choices, leaders work in the opposite direction, to develop fresh approaches to long-standing problems and to open issues for new options... Leaders create excitement in work."

Leadership involves developing people and the organization in order to deal and cope with both complexity and change.
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Burns (1978) drew a distinction between management and leadership a year later in his seminal work entitled *Leadership*. He differentiates between transactional and transforming leadership, equating the former with management and the latter with leadership. Transactional leadership "occurs when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things," while transforming leadership "occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. ???). He em-

phasizes the concept of moral leadership and its power, influence, and capacity to change and inspire people. Leadership, in this sense, is about inspiring people, creating a shared vision, and motivating people to act beyond their potential.

According to Kouzes and Posner (1990) in their book *The Leadership Challenge*, leaders “ignite” subordinates passions and serve as a compass by which to guide followers. They define leadership as the “art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations.” The emphasis lies in the follower’s desire to contribute and the leader’s ability to motivate others to action. Leaders respond to customers, create vision, energize employees, and thrive in fast-paced “chaotic” environments. Furthermore, leadership is about articulating visions, embodying values, and creating the environment within which things can be accomplished.

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According to Kotter (1990), leaders communicate vision and direction, align people, motivate, inspire, and energize followers. In addition, leaders are change agents and empowerers of

the people they lead. Leadership is the process of giving purpose (meaningful direction) to collective effort, and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve purpose. Furthermore, effective managerial leadership spawns effective managerial work. Kotter believes that “good management brings a degree of order and consistency to key dimensions like the quality and profitability of products” contrasted with his conception of leadership, which is “about coping with change” rather than “coping with complexity.” Leadership involves developing people and the organization in

order to deal and cope with both complexity and change.

Probably the most popular distinction between management and leadership is Bennis’ (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 21) definition: “Leaders are people who do the right thing; managers are people who do things right.” According to Bennis, effective leaders perform three functions: align, create, and empower. Leaders transform organizations by aligning human and other resources, creating an organizational culture that fosters the free expression of ideas, and empowering others to contribute to the organization.

As we distinguish management and leadership, the theoretician and the practitioner is better able to study each independently and therefore in more detail. This research and practice has the potential of developing and training individuals to take full advantage of the position they find themselves in any group or organization of any size, in any sector of life. Thus, the employee with no formal authority now has hope that his or her leadership capacity need not be dampened by organizational position. The positional head, also, can now recognize a duality of responsibilities (i.e., ensure high productivity and create self-led followers) in such a way as to achieve them both. A clear distinction between management and leadership is essential for people of any sort to fully realize the potential of each other in the organizational enterprises of life.

### **The Four V's**

No matter the perspective of leadership one may hold, using the four concepts described below provides a useful framework to understand and apply leadership in organizations. These concepts reveal common elements of organizational activity that help define

what is meant by leadership (and to some extent what is meant by management). These ideas are not only a prescription of what leadership involves, but also provides descriptive power as we look at the "leadership" or "management" of others. These concepts are known as the Four V's – Values, Vision, Vector, and Voice.

Speaking of values, James MacGregor Burns (1978) said,

*"I define leadership as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and motivations —the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations – of both leaders and followers. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their follower's values and motivations." (p. 19).*

The way leaders act, react, and interact in a values connotation – considering the values and motives of followers – brings us to the very practical elements of vision, vector and voice. The vision operationalizes values, explicitly placing values into an organizational or relationship context. The vector sends the values and vision in a direction, towards a goal, fulfilling a

The four V's of leadership – Values, Vision, Vector, and Voice – offer a helpful way to examine and implement leadership technology in our work and personal experiences.

mission. Voice ensures that leaders and followers are both involved, though the level of involvement may vary depending upon ones conception of leadership.

The four V's of leadership offer a helpful way to examine and implement leadership technology in our work and personal experiences.

### Values

A person's value-set has a powerful influence on the way they perceive and act in the world. In this sense, vision and values are inextricably linked; both intend to impact individual perceptions and behavior. An essential element of leadership is developing the ability to grasp the core beliefs and values of others -- the followers. Leaders do this the same way followers learn the values-sets of their leaders -- they listen and watch.

Leaders engage in naïve listening (Fairholm, 1998) where they listen as if it were the first time they heard what they were hearing. It is an active process of respectfully at-

An essential element of leadership is developing the ability to grasp the core beliefs and values of others -- the followers.

tending to what the speaker wants to communicate. Listening to followers is not just a common courtesy nor a management gimmick to obtain compliance. It is an essential skill leaders must acquire to ascertain the core values of others to gauge commitment to a set of organizational values and an organizational vision.

Watching is also important -- not the supervision required to oversee process compliance -- but rather the discerning observation of how people operate and relate to each other over time. Leaders and followers must be comfortable with a values connotation to the work they do because leadership depends upon it.

The successful leader teaches the individual the accepted values (culled from personal introspection and organizational observation) and lets the followers choose and act for themselves, confident that their actions will not damage the organization because the values are consistent with group objectives. Lead-

ers address the needs, wants, and values of their followers (and their own needs). Therefore, they also serve as an independent force in changing the makeup of the followers' values set through gratifying their motives (see Burns, 1978, p. 20). Individuals will want to do what is best for the organization, because they "buy in" to what the organization stands for. In fact, what the organization stands for is actually what the individual stands for in significant degree.

### *Vision*

A wise man once said, "Vision without effort is daydreaming. Effort without vision is drudgery. Vision with effort will get you the prize." When we talk of vision as a principle of leadership, we are not referring to the statements that hang on the wall (though they have their purpose). We aren't talking about what we see the future to be in twenty years (though these goals can help shape an organization's future).

Vision is rather the articulation of who we are, what we care about, and why we do what we do.

Vision is rather the articulation of who we are, what we care about, and why we do what we do. Visions represent the essential nature of the organization and tap into the real values that drive the people in an organization. A vision wraps the organization in a value-laden field within which individuals view themselves and others in certain ways and act consistent with the value contexts.

In simple terms, visions take the drudgery out of our work and help us put forth the kind of effort our values dictate we should. In your organizations, the articulation of a simple, powerful vision is one of the greatest leadership activities you can perform.

### *Vector*

Max DePree (1992) suggests that leadership is hard work. But it is different work than management and, therefore, perhaps more difficult to measure, and, perhaps, less appreciated in some organizations. Because what they do is often unmeasurable, uncountable, in the strictest sense, the results of leaders are often dismissed.

There *is* purpose and direction to the work of organizational leadership – vector – which demands that results are achieved in terms of high performance. Coupled with high performance, however, is the growth of individuals as self-led, self-aware followers. Eric Hoffer said, "the leader has to be practical and a realist, yet he must talk the language of the visionary and the idealist." This comment captures two essential elements of leadership: 1) the practical informed by 2) the ideal. It suggests that the practical (high performance and self-led followers) can best be achieved through the understanding of the ideal (the values and vision).

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In a real sense the vector is what we often term as the mission. Mission, like a vector, involves direction and magnitude – direction for the here and now to help us get to the future, and magnitude of effort, resources, and planning to help us get there. Sometimes confused as the "vision," an organization's mission is what an organization contributes to society; it's shareholders and/or stakeholders, its customers, and its employees.

The organization's mission is its primary and support functions. It is what the organization does and/or provides that is

unique to that organization and makes it competitive within its niche. Mission statements usually contain four components (see Whitlock & Fairholm, 2001):

- Who the organization is... a statement of identity or differentiation from other organizations within the same market or niche
- What the organization accomplishes... its "value-added"
- Who the customers are
- Who the employees and stakeholders are

If a "sense of mission" is perceived as lacking or no longer meaningful, goals and objectives may have little meaning for the organization. Mission should tie goals to vision and articulate the value-orientation of the culture. It should operationalize the vision and help the organization understand what it does.

#### *Voice*

Much has been written about participatory management, empowerment, synergy, and similar ideas that formally acknowledge the power of listening and communicating in groups. These tools are a part of (and point to) a more encompassing principle that proves more meaningful as we engage in leadership – what I call Voice. Voice has three

Understanding the role of Voice in leadership and respecting its strength are fundamental to success.	ways of shaping the leadership activity. The first is to recognize a leader's responsibility to articulate purpose – voicing the meaning and direction that others come to understand, accept, and adopt.
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The second is to recognize the contributions (in terms of actions and ideas) of followers. Followers voice ideas, concerns, and approval, especially in terms

of what we commonly call teams. In fact, voice may be what separates team communities from mere groups. This concept of voice, leader and led exchanging ideas, aspirations, and plans, may explain why different people in a group assume leadership at different times. Cicero (in his *Laws, III, 2*) reminds us of this cyclical nature of leadership: "For the man who rules efficiently must have obeyed others in the past, and the man who obeys dutifully appears fit at some later time to be a ruler. Thus he who obeys ought to expect to be a ruler in the future, and he who rules should remember that in a short time he will have to obey." Voice reminds us that leadership is indeed a relationship.

The third way voice shapes the leadership phenomenon undergirds the previous two. Voice represents the notion that leadership *and* followership are voluntary activities. Leaders and followers must be free to choose to lead and follow. In this way, all choose to act and not be acted upon. Rarely we have the chance to choose our managers. However, we always have the chance to choose who we let lead us. Understanding the role of Voice in leadership and respecting its strength are fundamental to success.

### **The Four V's of Leadership**

- **Values**  
*Values trigger behavior and reflect meaning, purpose, and commitment.*
- **Vision**  
*Vision operationalizes values.*
- **Vector**  
*Vector operationalizes vision.*
- **Voice**  
*Voice makes the leadership relationship work.*

## **On Leadership and Public Service**

The nature of work in public organizations is to tackle some of the “wicked problems” of social life that defy simplistic and generic approaches (see Harmon & Mayer, 1986). Tame problems have discrete definitions and easy solutions to implement, for instance fixing the copy machine when it breaks down. You may not know how to fix it yourself, but you know the steps involved to get it fixed.

Wicked problems are those that we can't really define and even if we could, we wouldn't really know how to solve them. Much of what government does, even, to some extent, the reason government exists, is to tackle the wicked problems. The preamble of the U.S. Constitution suggests some of the problems government is designed to tackle, such as establishing justice, ensuring domestic tranquility, providing for common defense, promoting the general welfare, and ensuring the blessings of liberty. While grand in scope, as the public sector fulfills these purposes through policy, planning, legislation, and the like, they grapple with the complexities of life and society in ways that private sector entities may never have to.

Some of the greatest frustrations emerge as public managers (trained in the methods of management) try to adopt “tame” solutions to “wicked” problems. Even worse, we sometimes define wicked problems as if they were tame so we can determine a solution and a timeline for that solution to be implemented. This management focus allows us to do what many have defined managers to be, people who solve problems.

But experience has shown that many of the organizational problems of our day and many of the public issues of our day

are indeed the kinds of problems that defy easy definition and quick fixes. This is where leadership comes in. Leadership allows us to adapt to the issues that we face and capitalize on the creativity and energy that emerges as people relate to one another around common goals and purposes. Because of the types of problems we face in government, leadership may be more important (at least just as important) as management. Hence the need to develop our expertise in being public leaders.

Public administrators have the opportunity to directly impact the lives of people every day. They have a unique leadership role to play in shaping the values, vision, vector, and voice of public organizations that then are used to tackle wicked problems, provide services, and ensure sound governance.

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