# Management Vs. Leadership

By Jim Clemmer

***"Leadership and management are two distinctive and complementary systems of action. Each has its own function and characteristic activities. Both are necessary for success in an increasingly complex and volatile business environment...strong leadership with weak management is no better, and is sometimes actually worse, than the reverse. The real challenge is to combine strong leadership and strong management and use each to balance the other."* — John Kotter, Management/Leadership Author and Professor of Organizational Behavior, Harvard Business School**

The terms "management" and "leadership" are often interchanged. In fact, many people view them as basically the same thing. Yet management is as distinct from leadership as day is from night. Both are necessary, however, for a high-performance organization. By contrasting them and understanding their differences, we can better balance and improve these essential roles.

One key distinction between management and leadership is that we manage *things* and lead *people*. Things include physical assets, processes, and systems. People include customers, external partners, and people throughout our team or organization (or "internal partners"). When dealing with things, we talk about a way of *doing*. In the people realm, we're talking about a way of *being*.

In The CLEMMER Group's consulting and training work we often add a third element – technical – to management and leadership to form what we call a "Performance Triangle." This adds another dimension to the question, "how should the organization's focus be allocated to each area?" While apparently simple, the question is often a very difficult one to answer, since there is no universal formula that applies to all organizations. Some need more technical skills or better technologies. Others need the discipline of better systems and processes. Most need a lot more leadership.

The triangle depicts the balance between the three critical success factors. Imagine a pendulum swinging in the center of the triangle. It's very difficult to keep the pendulum in a state of equilibrium. In some cases, organizations may need to swing the pendulum in one direction because that's where it's weakest. For example, entrepreneurial start-up companies often have strong vision, passion, and energy (leadership) and may also have good technological or technical skills. But their lack of systems and processes or poor management discipline leads to a lot of errors, poor service/quality, and frustration for customers and people in the organization.



The most common weakness, however, is in leadership. The triangle illustrates that a well-balanced organization has leadership at the base. This allows management and technology to serve rather than enslave producers, servers, and customers.

Another complicating factor is that needs are easily misidentified. For example, we have found that most organizations have communication problems of one kind or another. Often these are seen as leadership issues. Many times they are. But just as often the roots of the problem are intertwined with poor processes, systems, or structure – all of which are management issues.

While it is important to recognize the differences between leadership and management, it is also important to appreciate that the two have complementary strengths, as well.

**Complementary Strengths**

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| --- | --- |
| **Management** | **Leadership** |
| Processes | People |
| Facts | Feelings |
| Intellectual | Emotional |
| Head | Heart |
| Position power | Persuasion power |
| Control | Commitment |
| Problem solving | Possibility thinking |
| Reactive | Proactive |
| Doing things right | Doing the right things |
| Rules | Values |
| Goals | Vision |
| Light a fire under people | Stoke the fire within people |
| Written communications | Verbal communications |
| Standardization | Innovation |

Warren Bennis, Professor of Business Administration at the University of Southern California, has been extensively studying and writing about leadership for many decades. He explains why leaders are so much more successful than managers, in harnessing people power: "Management is getting people to do what needs to be done. Leadership is getting people to want to do what needs to be done. Managers push. Leaders pull. Managers command. Leaders communicate."

Both management and leadership are needed to make teams and organizations successful. Trying to decide which is more important, is like trying to decide whether the right or left wing is more important to an airplane's flight. I'll take both please!

Jim Clemmer's  [practical leadership & personal growth books](http://www.jimclemmer.com/online-book-store-audio-leadership-books-leadership-management-time-management.php), [workshops](http://www.jimclemmer.com/customized-workshops-for-staff-and-management-teams.php), and [team retreats](http://www.jimclemmer.com/management-team-retreats.php) have helped hundreds of thousands of people worldwide improve personal, team, and organizational performance. Jim's web site,  [JimClemmer.com](http://www.jimclemmer.com), has over [300 articles](http://www.jimclemmer.com/leadership-articles.php) and [dozens of video clips](http://jimclemmer.com/index.php?option=com_seyret) covering a broad range of topics on change, [organization improvement, self-leadership, and leading others](http://www.jimclemmer.com/leadership-articles.php). Sign-up to receive Jim's [popular monthly newsletter](http://www.jimclemmer.com/newsletter/), and follow his [leadership blog](http://www.jimclemmer.com/blog/). Jim's international bestsellers include *The VIP Strategy,* [*Firing on All Cylinders*](http://www.jimclemmer.com/firing-on-all-cylinders.php)*,* [*Pathways to Performance*](http://www.jimclemmer.com/pathways-to-performance-a-guide-to-transforming-yourself-your-team-and-your-organization.php)*,* [*Growing the Distance*](http://www.jimclemmer.com/content/view/726)*,* [*The Leader's Digest*](http://www.jimclemmer.com/the-leaders-digest-timeless-principles-for-team-and-organization-success.php) *and* [*Moose on the Table*](http://www.jimclemmer.com/content/view/961). His latest book is [*Growing @ the Speed of Change.*](http://www.jimclemmer.com/growing-the-speed-of-change.php)