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OnPoint

A COLLECTION OF ARTICLES

New sections to guide you through each article:

- *The Idea in Brief*
- *The Idea at Work*
- *Exploring Further. . .*

What's the difference between leaders and managers?

They're the yin and yang of change and stability—and you need both.

PRODUCT NUMBER 8288

Best of HBR on Leadership: *Balancing Stability and Change*

Overview

Managers and Leaders: *Are They Different?*

by Abraham Zaleznik

What Leaders Really Do

by John P. Kotter

What Effective General Managers Really Do

by John P. Kotter

Leadership: *Sad Facts and Silver Linings*

by Thomas J. Peters

THE ARTICLES

"Managers and Leaders: Are They Different?"

by Abraham Zaleznik

This groundbreaking article initiated the debate about managers and leaders. Zaleznik argues that although effective managers are tough, persistent, analytical, and well-intentioned, they don't provide the passion and inspiration that true leaders offer. Managers seek order, control, and rapid resolution of problems, while leaders tolerate chaos, capture imaginations, and welcome fresh approaches to problems. Zaleznik suggests how to create the right conditions for leaders to flourish.

“What Leaders Really Do”

by John P. Kotter

Kotter reinforces organizations' need for managers *and* leaders—especially in turbulent times. Both decide what needs to be done and create networks of people to do it. But each performs these tasks differently. *Managers* bring order to chaos through planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, and problem solving. *Leaders* set direction for change through visioning and strategy, aligning people behind initiatives, and inspiring people to act on shared visions. To benefit from managers and leaders, companies must cultivate executives with *both* sets of skills.

“What Effective General Managers Really Do”

by John P. Kotter

While his subject is nominally managers, Kotter tackles leadership as well in this article. He argues that highly structured workdays and rigid schedules choke off key information and relationships leaders need to set direction and motivate, e.g., hallway chats and impromptu meetings. He highlights flexible—but clear—agendas and broad relationship networks as critical leadership tools. The best leaders appear to get things done by randomly talking about disjointed topics with lots of people who don't even report to them!

“Leadership: Sad Facts and Silver Linings”

by Thomas J. Peters

Like Kotter, Peters encourages leaders to resist the urge to defend carefully organized days against interruptions, noisy problems, and fragmented attention. A leader's job is *not* to solve problems—it's to shape his company's values and educate by example. The frustrations that plague busy leaders daily actually help them fulfill both responsibilities—by letting them take key stakeholders' pulses, plant ideas, and build consensus in favor of new directions and priorities.

What's the difference between managers and leaders? Abraham Zaleznik sparked this still incendiary debate back in 1977.

Traditional management theorists, he argued—with their organizational diagrams and time-motion studies—ignored the *human* side of leadership: the inspiration, vision, and raw emotion and drive that fuel corporate success.

Managers, Zaleznik said, promote the *stability* that helps companies function daily. Leaders catalyze *change*—empowering their firms to adapt and compete in a constantly shifting world.

Stability versus change is an age-old contradiction. Yet, as John Kotter argued when he expanded on Zaleznik's thinking, companies must embrace both to thrive in turbulent times. Balancing this yin and yang, companies build a solid foundation *and* agility. This *Harvard Business Review* OnPoint collection suggests how to begin. First, grasp the principal distinction between managers and leaders, and cultivate environments in which both can flourish. Also, capitalize on the chaotic, messy conditions that characterize a typical business day. Those very conditions are opportunities for leaders to fulfill their *real* responsibilities: setting direction and motivating others to embrace—and surmount—the challenge of change.

Best of HBR on Leadership: Balancing Stability and Change

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COLLECTION OVERVIEW