An ITIL® Service Provider

Article

Managers and Leaders

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Should managers be replaced with leaders?

Modern-thinking business organisations need Leaders not just Managers. That said, some Managers may indeed be Leaders however, contrary to what some believe, just because someone wears the label Manager' does not by default make them a Leader! Good Managers can be terrible Leaders, and equally, I think it fair to say that good Leaders can also be terrible Managers - I firmly believe that we confuse the two!

The problem is that some company organisations/enterprises only recognise Managers and fail to recognise Leaders. Some believe that if they were to acknowledge Leaders within their existing organisational structure this would introduce conflict between Managers and Leaders.

In my opinion, I think these concerns surround nothing more than power, hierarchical positioning, and in some cases ego. The sad thing however, these concerns add no value to operational efficiency/excellence and ultimately the customer.

People make things happen, and People can stop things happening!

How would leaders fit into an organisational structure?

As an ITIL® instructor/trainer, coupled with IT service management (ITSM) experience, I can only take an ITSM perspective however, I believe the concept highlighted applies to all aspects of the business

Some organisations/enterprises become disillusioned when trying to implement best practice principles, such as ITIL. With the upmost of respect, these organisations get it completely wrong! They select employees and put them on one or more training courses and think the job is done. Far from it, firstly back at the workplace some of these people are unable to win a natural following, some are only capable of influencing through command or hierarchical positioning, not through promoting true commitment, a passion that is sincere and believable, and an enthusiasm that people want to be part of. Good Leaders trust and are trusted by everyone, good Leaders can operate within diverse cultures, and good Leaders walk-the-talk by contributing to other people's successes and the business, not their own. Not to mention, implementing such principles should not be looked upon as a project! This is not a one hit wonder; we are introducing a fibre that forms the basis of how we think and act.

In the context of ITSM, I would identify a Manager/Leader (e.g., someone who represents both). This person would head a service management office (SMO) which can be physical or virtual. I would then identify a number of Servant Leaders (hierarchical power is of no value for this role and neither necessary as dedicated full-time role). Servant Leaders can continue with their day-to-day responsibilities but think holistically in the interests of the organisation/enterprise as a whole, and when required, are acknowledged as operating cross-functionally (e.g., outside of the team which they may belong). In this case, Servant leaders would have two primary lines of reporting, i) their specific team if relevant, and ii) the SMO.

Servant Leaders do not command, Servant Leaders serve and lead, Servant Leaders do not do things for other people, they educate, motivate, and engender confidence in other people to do these things themselves, or do these things better.

Typically, I would expose all personnel to ITIL 4 Foundation level, and then expose Servant Leaders to elected ITIL 4 Upper-levels. I would infiltrate Servant Leaders organisation-wide, this way the required culture of learning, improving, adopting and adapting would become widespread and equally defuse those silent resisters.