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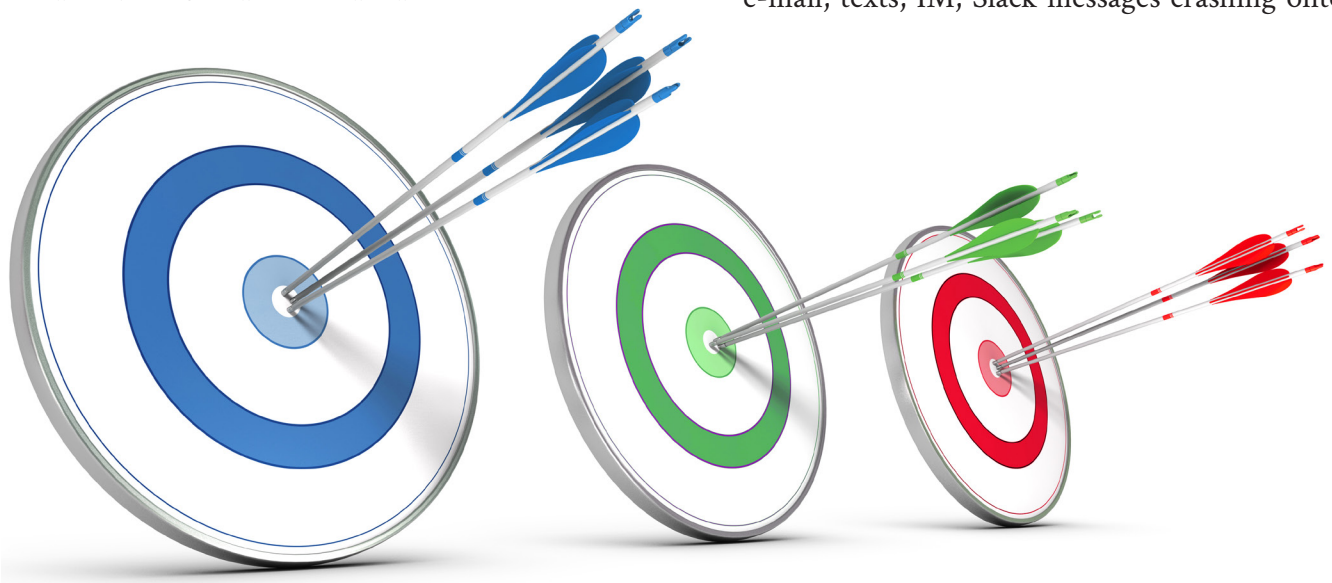
Leading, Managing, Doing What's the Difference?

by Brian McDonald, President, MOR Associates, September 2020

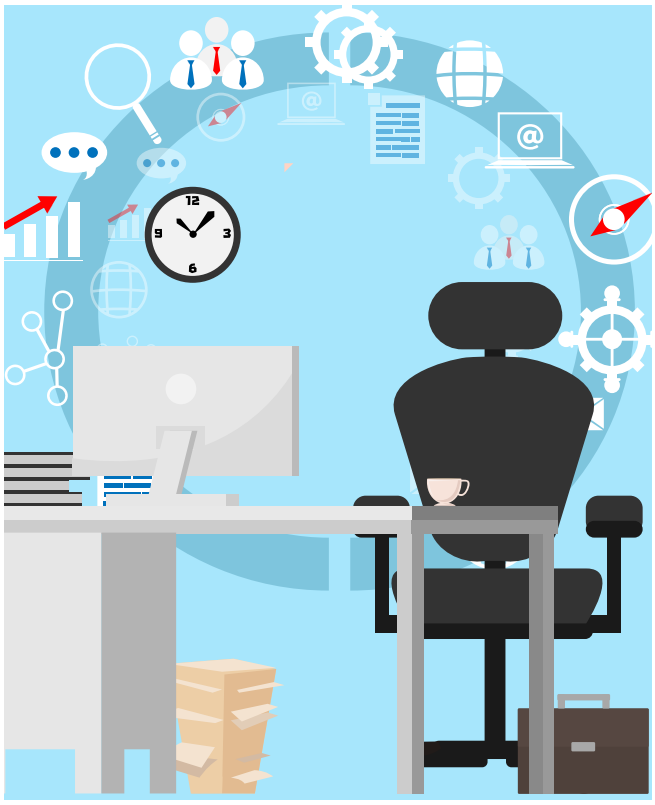
As a leader you want to make sure that your organization is successful both today and in the future, whether you are in charge of a unit of four people or you are responsible for a multi-layered organization of four hundred or four thousand. As a leader you are responsible for ensuring the services or products as well as the organization's operational capabilities continue to evolve to meet the future demands. You want to be a leader who sees the future and helps steer the organization around shoals, both predictable and unpredictable, so that your "customers" are satisfied in the short run and into the future. In other words, you want to function more as a "strategic leader"—in addition to fulfilling your managerial role or more tactical responsibilities. You do not want to be the leader who fails to anticipate shifts in the external environment or the internal context that puts your group's value proposition at risk.

To be a strategic leader, you must arrange your working life to have enough time to think, plan, and reflect about the future needs of your organization, its ever-changing technological and societal context, and its capacity to meet these future needs given the realities of the ever-changing environment. However, finding the time is often daunting given how demanding workdays alone can be, never mind attending to interests you have in your family and friends. As for having any time for yourself to ensure that your life is balanced and healthy, well, that seems even more challenging in our constantly streaming world.

In today's always-connected global environment, someone somewhere is always reaching out. As a result, too many managers are overwhelmed by their day-to-day demands. These often appear as a steady and relentless flow of e-mail, texts, IM, Slack messages crashing onto



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their devices. They all say "read me, read me, pay attention now, now!" Bosses, subordinates, and peers pop up with a plaintive "This will just take a minute…" which, of course, is never the case. Or, "Can you help with this?" And even when others are not intruding you already have other standing obligations: meetings to prepare for and attend, conference calls, individuals you need to talk to, presentations to prepare, reports to write, meetings with staff you feel are necessary in order to further the mission of your unit. The list goes on.

To *begin* to get a handle on all of this it's important to recognize that regardless of what our formal position or role is within our organization; each unit of our time – whether a minute or an hour or a day – is usually spent attending to activities related to LEADING, MANAGING, or DOING. Differentiating between these allows you to be intentional in how you spend your time, and being intentional is the key to your maximizing your effectiveness and achieving the right balance.

Distinguishing Between Leading, Managing and Doing

Warren Bennis' straightforward definition of leadership is that "leaders do the right things (both strategically as well as ethically) while managers ensure we are doing those things right." John Kotter says, "Leadership [is] the development of vision and strategies, the alignment of relevant people behind those strategies, and the empowerment of individuals to make the vision happen despite obstacles."

Leaders set the direction oftentimes in consultation with others, and managers implement the strategies and actions needed to achieve the goals. In most cases, people are in roles that require both leading and managing, and these responsibilities work in tandem.

Doers are getting specific tasks done.

Though critically important, the work of leading is often not urgent, especially compared to the obvious demands of doing. **As a result, too many people in the role of leader-manager discover they are actually working as a manager-doer.**

The table that follows contrasts the different responsibilities you have as a leader, manager and doer.



	LEADERS	MANAGERS	DOERS
FOCUS	**Direct** • Track external trends • Develop the desired future state • Set strategic goals • Identify initiatives critical to the future success	**Plan** • Align people/processes • Convert desired future state into goals/plans • Set out what is needed to accomplish goals • Guide critical initiatives	**Act** • Execute project plan • Work down the to-do list • Solve problems
PEOPLE	**Align** • Engage people in forming the strategy • Communicate what the vision/strategy and why • Inspire people to enlist • Ensure the talent, learning, and capability needed	**Organize** • Engage people in the implementation • Communicate the priorities and consult on how • Initiate the projects/ process improvements • Ensure staffing, skills, and structure needed	**Execute** • Get stuff done • Communicate progress • Respond to what needs doing • Ensure efficiency in completing actions
PROCESS	**Focus** • Develop the messaging • Enlist champions of the change at all levels • Recognize progress • Watch and empower • Reward what you want repeated	**Coordinate** • Deliver the messaging • Recruit contributors to manage the change • Measure results against targets • Build commitment, engage people in the how • Resolve challenges, remove obstacles	**Contribute** • Bring the messaging to life • Get the core work done • Achieve targets • Feel empowered to act • Generate quality contributions
RESULTS	**Strategic** • Position the organization to add value now and in the future • Develop new strategies or initiatives to achieve outcomes • Open up new organizational capabilities • Ensure financial viability	**Operational** • Produce stakeholder outcomes: quality, service, cost, on budget • Continuous improvement in processes • Deliver the results • Allocate resources	**Individual** • Produce specific task outcomes • Continuous personal improvement • Check off to-do items • Conduct analysis and respond to issues/inquiries

Elaborating on Leading, Managing and Doing

Leading is when we focus on the more strategic aspects of our role – essentially planning for the future or doing real-time scenario planning. As the table suggests leading involves tracking external trends, anticipating future needs, developing a vision and strategies to achieve goals, engaging others in formulating and undertaking strategic pursuits, and building organizational capabilities required for the future. All this work requires engaging our stakeholders as well as our staff and others who are crucial to bringing about the changes needed for the organization to be successful in a constantly evolving environment.

An effective leader is a strategic thinker who can get up on the balcony to see the bigger picture.

Leaders need to be able to play out different scenarios-what if, set out a direction for their organization and communicate this in a compelling way that enlists others to support that direction.

During a crisis a leader needs to assess the situation, consult those with knowledge and expertise and adapt as needed. There is still the need to set a direction though this may require quicker decisions and the ability to consistently communicate where the organization is headed and what needs to get done. Leaders also need to reassure people where they can.

Managing is when we work with others to organize, allocate, and coordinate people and processes to obtain the desired outcomes. For example, drafting goals, setting priorities and operational plans, allocating resources, submitting budgets, and "managing" individuals and teams by assigning responsibilities, developing policies, procedures, and systems to monitor implementation. Managers are also involved in moving key changes and initiatives forward.

During a crisis a manager needs to assess the situation, respond and adapt as needed. It is important to communicate as quickly as possible to help others understand what's happening as well as what is needed, Scenario planning and agility are critical skills for managers even more so in these times.

An effective manager owns the processes that are integral to getting the work done. It is our responsibility to make sure these processes are designed to optimize the ability to produce the desired results. It is important to step back periodically and explore how we can simplify, automate or innovate to develop more effective and efficient processes for getting the work done. Managers may initiate projects or help implement the change initiatives that are important to the organization's ability to execute as well as position itself to be increasingly effective.

Doing not surprisingly refers to actually "getting stuff done." This could involve tasks needed to accomplish the goals or simply responding to the issue of the day. Examples of this includes collecting data for a report, preparing a presentation, providing help of a routine nature, solving problems, carrying out a step in the business process, attending status meetings, dealing with day-to-day emails and phone calls. This more immediate work can dominate a person's day to the point they aren't spending the time leading or managing.



So How Are You Dividing Your Time? Is It the Right Mix?

Before you can decide whether your mix of time spent leading, managing, and doing is the most optimum combination, it is important to calculate approximately what percentage of your time currently goes to each activity. There is no "one size fits all" for how leaders should apportion their time since the right balance varies from individual to individual, and from role to role. Nonetheless, the odds are that given your role, you spend relatively less time leading than would be useful to the organization – probably less than you spend either managing or doing. If you are going to help your organization meet the challenges ahead, you may need to increase the time you spend leading and, most likely, managing as well.

To accomplish this will require strategies designed to reduce, or at the very least contain, the amount of time you actually spend doing work others could complete. If you are a manager with direct reports many of these tasks can be delegated to staff reducing your "doing work below your pay grade" while giving staff opportunities to learn and grow.

If not, your day will continue to be hijacked by the immediate, but not necessarily the important. This pattern may prevent you from addressing the most important tasks and issues facing you and the organization. The constant stream of email, IM, Slack, meetings, interruptions, and crises de jour can prevent you from finding the time that could be better used for strategy and focusing on the most important. In sum, many of us should spend less time doing the work that has lower value so we will have more time to lead and ensure our organization continues to position itself to add value in an ever changing world.

If we do not devote sufficient time and thought to leading, and encouraging others to lead more, our organizations will not be prepared for tomorrow and tomorrow's challenges.

How Can We Shift the Ratio of L-M-D Activity?

How do we both prevent others and ourselves from creating a frenzied workday that inhibits our ability to get anything important done to achieve the needed results while preparing for the future? Here are four steps to help you lead more and spend less time doing tasks others could take on:

1. Devote time to focusing on the strategic issues important to the future. Establish clear priorities. What are your top 3 to 5 longer-term priorities? Set aside time on your calendar each week to work on these.
2. Reduce the time spent doing by delegating some of these tasks to others. Find ways to create efficiencies for those tasks that minimize the time spent "doing."
3. Develop and coach your staff so that they can step up and take more ownership.
4. Prioritize how you spend your time. Your calendar is your most strategic asset. How you spend your time and your talent is what the organization pays you for so be intentional in how this precious resource gets allocated.

For more insights on strategies to support focusing more on leading versus doing refer to the MOR Applied Learning, *Balancing the Important and the Immediate*.