

MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

*The following is excerpted from the forthcoming book, **Be the Rooster**, by Robert Schulman. These excerpts are from the chapters titled "Management" and "Leadership". The book is about surviving today's new corporate environment. It focuses on how to manage most effectively in that environment and, separately, how best to lead. Most provocatively, the book also shows how to negotiate both externally in a sales process and internally in dealing with counterparts and superiors. **Be the Rooster** also proposes a unique restructuring for the sales process that is used to build organizations.*

Business is war. Let me be clear: there are real winners and real losers. The winners get rich and famous, and the losers *die*. In a bad business environment with stagnant wages and high unemployment like the current mess in this country, if you run with the herd, you end up a lamb chop. John P. Getty once said, "The meek shall inherit the earth, but not the mineral rights." He meant it!

The current environment is lousy. Most of you wish that you had picked a different line of work and believe, rationally or otherwise, that everybody else has it easier. It has never been any easier; business, by its nature, is supposed to be hard. The system has evolved to weed out the losers and over reward the winners. Let me remind you that you likely selected business to earn an above-average income. There is no reason you should think that can be accomplished with below average effort. Or blind luck.

So, now you're a manager. What do you do first?

Create a corporate culture. It doesn't matter whether you have just been promoted for the first time and are supervising two contemporaries you worked with and went drinking with yesterday; you run a division of a company; or you are the COO of a large business. You are the chief culture officer. There is an old saying, "Lead by example." This statement, like many old sayings, is false. In fact, you may manage by example, which we will talk about in this chapter, but leadership is your final goal.

Own and speak from the moral high ground every day. There is no more trash talk about the company, the boss, the products, the sales department, or anything else. Keeping

your mouth shut is harder than you might think; everybody wants to be one of the guys or one of the girls. Humans are social creatures and are very attuned to changes in their social environment. Getting promoted may cost you friends and a social life. Haven't you already experienced this? Your friend Sue, at work, receives a promotion to manager. Suddenly she is less available and there are topics she will no longer discuss. The nature and depth of your relationship with your new manager has changed. Somewhere down the line someone asks you, "Why is Sue acting differently?" She is being a manager.

In Management, Execution Is Everything

Schedule a weekly staff meeting. I suggest Monday morning—as early as your industry will tolerate. Make sure everyone understands it is his or her job to attend. For ninety minutes, once a week, everyone is equal. Everyone gets five to ten minutes to report on his or her plans and accomplishments. As the manager, you get to put a frame around the information and create a firm context around the updates. You also create a professional environment. You ask your reports to share with their counterparts what they are doing and why they are doing it. It is also your chance to share with them what is going on upstairs. No one gets out of participating. This is the most important meeting in their schedules.

Most leaders are selected from successful managers and, yet, most new leaders fail, even though they have been selected from the best and the brightest. What I outline in the [Be the Rooster](#) are the critical, non-linear requirements that distinguish between managers and leaders. Becoming a great manager only partially equips you to become a great leader.

Leadership

If I were describing the primary element of quality leadership, it would be the gift to bear, seemingly effortlessly, the responsibility of developing, embracing, and selling the vision and long-term business plans and principals of your organization. Leadership requires making a few lonely decisions when there are rational and valid views from smart people on both sides of the issue. This happens more than you might think. The stakes associated with these decisions are high. Sometimes the success or failure of the enterprise is determined by the outcome of your decision.

Leadership is the ability to communicate every aspect of the vision to each employee with all the information he or she needs to know, in a way and to a level of specificity that he or she can understand. Furthermore, revealing the vision should be accomplished while concealing any trace of uncertainty or insecurity you may have associated with the plan. At the same time, you cannot overstate the potential opportunities or understate the risk of failure.

The reason the person in charge makes the big bucks is that this skill may not be trainable. I do not know how you would train to do this. It may be the essence of the commonly held view that leaders are born, not made. Leadership is not something effectively taught in business school, and other jobs in management are not necessarily preparatory for the task.

The executives I coach always ask, "What is the real secret of effective leadership?" There is no simple answer to that question. My experience suggests that four behaviors are required to be an effective leader.

1. Remain open-minded and accepting of out-of-the-box creative thinking.
2. Be personally and passionately invested in the outcomes.
3. Use emotional appeals to inspire, direct, and motivate.
4. Be actively, visibly, and confidently engaged in decision-making in the face of ambiguity.

As you rise through the ranks, you become responsible for greater numbers of people and a greater number of decisions. You become less connected to each person and decision. Your role has shifted. You must now be a visionary and work hard to get the most out of the people charged with executing. You need to focus on long-term outcomes. "Is the organization moving in the right direction?" is the question that should keep you up at night.

You are the boss. Everyone around you is reading your facial expressions and your body language. If you had a fight with your spouse, everyone will be thinking about the implications of your bad mood. Your comments are being interpreted at a micro level. People will often see or hear things that you are not trying to communicate, or worse, trying not to communicate. Sometimes they are focusing on nothing, but just as

often they are sensing an uncertainty of which you may not be consciously aware. If this sounds like a lonely job, you are very perceptive. You may be too insecure to wear the leadership mantle. If that is the case, get a shrink or a mentor. Another approach might be to recognize your own strengths and weaknesses. Maybe a better choice for you would be to stay in senior management, turn down the promotion to lonely leadership, and get a dog. Having sat in that leader seat for many years, I can assure you that the isolation is intense and the inability to express actual reactions and emotions is exhausting. Not everyone is cut out for it, and honest reflection should temper your desire to win the brass ring or get to the top. It can be added that if something really goes bad in the business, it is always your fault, and you will very likely take the fall for the outcomes. The Apple board fired Steve Jobs for early mistakes at that firm. We know how that worked out.

Leadership is an intense exercise in public speaking. If you are speaking to the press or to your board of directors, you are making public statements for which you will be held responsible. The good news is that nobody can read your mind. You must accept that your statements will be accepted largely at face value. That will not discourage folks from speculating about what you left out or really meant to say. Almost everyone is a wreck on the inside compared to what they portray publicly. It is a leap of faith to believe that no one really sees your mushy inside. Let me assure you, I have never given a speech without being nervous, but my mushy inside has always remained invisible. I have also watched many people I have coached address their organizations. I knew they were wrecks inside, but I could not detect their discomfort by watching them speak. This public role is not for everyone, but there is no way to become a leader without crossing the divide. Remember, you must guard against comparing your insides with other people's outsides.

The standard for communication is high. As a leader, you are an actor. You will be judged not only by what you say but also by how and when you say it. Your employees are keeping score as to how convincingly you deliver the message and how sincere you appear while doing it. Buddha reminds us, "it's what the people hear, not what you say." That is why verbal communication is so challenging.

Cynicism and cronyism are gone. You no longer have the luxury of flip remarks or a posse to take to lunch. Go to lunch with your direct reports and fulfill your

management responsibilities, or go with employee groups to answer their vision and opportunity questions. You are being watched like a hawk watches a mouse. Force yourself to wave the flag and be optimistic even when it feels disingenuous. Focus on what the future will bring, not on which road the company is traveling to get there. Ignore the temptation to supply details. That is their manager's job.

Leadership is the ability to inspire, build consensus, align interests, create vision, and delegate. If this sounds easy, maybe you were born to lead. If management adopts your vision, you can step aside, and let your management team do the work. If the managers don't adopt your vision after that speech, rethink your management team.