

Leadership Versus Management by Robert Youker

The general literature on leadership is very confusing. There are over 250 different definitions of leadership in the literature! Many of these definitions are not operational in that they don't provide guides to action. What specifically does a leader do? There is confusion over how leadership contrasts with the words "management" and "authority." Educational institutions like the Harvard Business School say their mission is to train leaders, but every professor has his or her own definition of leadership. We need a definition that tells people exactly what they need to do to provide leadership to a group.

Among social scientists, there is a good deal of consensus over the definition of leadership. The basic reference on the subject is Ralph M. Stogdill's *Handbook of Leadership*.¹ The consensus definitions from that work are as follows:

"Leadership is helping a group to agree on and commit to an objective."

"Leadership is an interpersonal relation where others follow because they want to, not because they have to."

Peter Drucker defined a leader as a person who has followers. This is very specific and defines the exact behavior required. A leader needs to help a group to agree on and commit to an objective. In modern terms, this is about selling a vision. "Follow ship" is voluntary. This contrasts with management, where there is formal authority from the organization for the manager to give orders and expect them to be carried out. Managers have control power, while leaders must operate through influence.

It is best, of course, if the managers the organization promotes have natural leadership qualities, but anyone at any level in an organization can provide leadership at any time. Leadership is about motivating people to follow in a certain direction. Informal leaders, those who motivate people to perform activities that are antithetical to the objectives of the organization, are a key problem for organizations today.

The above are simple definitions and are fully operational in the project management environment. The first and most important step in project management is to define the project objective and to get the team to commit to the objective of the project. This includes listening to personal and organizational objectives to strive for the best fit, or overlap, so all can achieve as much of their objectives as possible. This point was emphasized by Garry Wills in his book *Certain Trumpets: The Call of Leaders*: "they must see things as the followers see them in order to recruit those followers."²

Gaining influence without having formal positional authority and power is a recurring problem in project management today. This is leadership; it starts with getting the team to jointly agree on and commit to an objective. Commitment, however, is another problem. Author and management expert Kenneth Blanchard once said that "there is a difference between interest and commitment. When you're interested in doing something, you do it only when it is convenient. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses, only results." Project managers need to generate such commitment. The project manager also needs to maintain that commitment over time as team members receive other assignments and lose interest in the project's original vision.

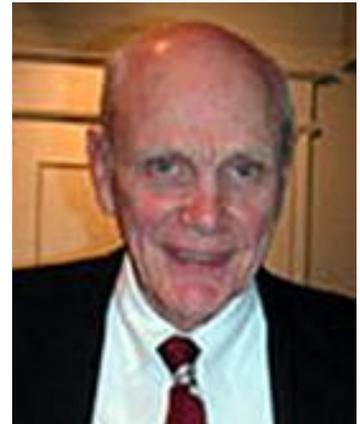
A common question is, "Are leaders born or made?" Certainly the ability to attract followers involves personality and some people naturally have that ability and personality. However, when we clearly define the need as "helping a group to agree on and commit to an objective," the requirements to be a leader become clear. There is a need to communicate effectively, to listen, to motivate, to inspire, to sell an idea, and to have a good idea. Anybody can learn to do this with practice.

I welcome your comments about this *Advisor* and encourage you to send your insights on the market in general to comments@cutter.com. -- Robert Youker

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About the Author

Bob Youker was a Director of IPMA from 1977 through 1988, taking the seat formerly occupied by Russ Archibald. He participated and presented in many IPMA Conferences from 1974 through the early 2000s. He presented keynotes at several of them, and organized panels and workshops in others. He introduced IPMA into a dozen government agencies and businesses all over the World, and in many cases, connected those agencies and businesses with IPMA leaders.



Bob introduced and popularized innovations to the practice of project management, from his work in Xerox in the 1960s, to his leadership in the first manual project management planning and tracking tools (Planalog President, 1968-1974). He published an early book on the Critical Path Method, *Analysis Bar Charting*, by John Mulvaney. As of today, that book has sold more than 30,000 copies.

In his work for World Bank, Bob developed training that have benefited thousands of project and program managers, and government officials, mostly in developing countries. He performed that training in over a dozen developing countries around the World over a 30 year period, and continues today, to help developing and developed nations.

In the 1970s, to increase Executive visibility for the fledgling practice of project management, Bob engineered the publishing of a Harvard Business Review collection of articles on the subject. He suggested the collection, but was told there were not enough articles for a special collection. He bought copies of the articles, submitted them, and the Harvard Business Review published one of their most popular reprint series, with a number of classic articles on project management.

To summarize, Robert "Bob" Youker has contributed massively to the profession or practice of project management, to *asapm*, to IPMA, and to society. This is why, on March 5, 2012, we announced our nomination of **Robert Youker as an *asapm* Distinguished Fellow.**

Notes

¹Stogdill, Ralph M. *Handbook of Leadership*. The Free Press, 1974.

²Wills, Garry. *Certain Trumpets: The Call of Leaders*. Simon & Schuster, 1995.