



Change Your Management Mindset

By Jean Maslanka Kelley

Whether you're in a new leadership position due to a promotion or being newly hired, you may have to learn to think in a new way. To be successful, you need to shift your mindset so you can focus on the new requirements and outcomes you're being held accountable for. In other words, you need to let go of many tasks that have made you successful thus far and focus on what your team can deliver. If you don't, you won't make the leap into your new position successfully.

Unfortunately, many people don't transition into leadership roles well. Why? Sometimes they simply don't know what's expected of them. Communication is poor in many companies, and few people receive detailed instructions on how to lead and what competencies it takes to lead. So while someone may get a new title, they have no idea what to actually do in this new role. As such, they face ambiguity every day. Other times people are moving from a technical role into a leadership role, and they don't want to let go of their spreadsheets, maps, or other technical responsibilities. They enjoy the details of the work and aren't ready to delegate those details to others. They claim that it will take them longer to teach someone than to actually do the work themselves.

However, when you're living with daily ambiguity or not delegating the details, you quickly become overworked and overstressed. That's why you need to shift your mindset, let go of who you were or what you did, and make the leap into your new leadership role. The following tips will help you do that successfully.

- **Learn the differences between supervisory management and leadership.**

The management job involves planning, organizing, directing, and controlling, and a good manager knows how to do all of that. Leadership takes all that plus vision, passion and influence. However, many managers fail when they move into a leadership role because they don't know how to shift those responsibilities into a leadership position. They can't totally let go of those detail-oriented things because they're still accountable for them, just in a different way.

Realize that some people are great leaders while they are still supervisors and managers, while others are chosen for leadership because of their superb technical skills and critical thinking ability. If you are the latter, the climb for you is steeper.

So the first step is to find out what you're being paid for and what, specifically, is required of you in this new position. A good question to ask is, "What am I getting paid for?" or "What do I need to be doing that I'm not doing now?"

One way to develop a strategic and leadership-oriented way of thinking is to start reading the "Harvard Business Journal" every month. Very soon you will know how CEOs from around the world and in various industries think. Additionally, stay away from industry specific journals, because you're probably an expert in that area already. Rather, read about different companies and how they attained success. Autobiographies of famous leaders are good sources too.

Ultimately, a leader is paid for thinking strategically and for making sure plans is executed. A supervisor is paid for participating in getting those things done. So while you may not individually be responsible for all the details any longer, don't fool yourself; you can't drop the details. You need to be checking them since you're still accountable for them in some form. Inspect what you expect.

- **Rebrand yourself.**

Unless you are new at a company you already have a reputation. A reputation is what you have; a brand is what you want to be known for. Rebranding takes work.

When you're in a leadership role, however, you must know what your reputation is, and you must make a conscious decision on what you want to be in terms of your brand. The best way to uncover this information is to ask people, "What do others think of me?" As you do this, don't waste time asking your friends and family. They'll be more concerned with sparing your feelings than giving you honest feedback. Rather, ask co-workers, upper management, past managers, and anyone else whom you believe would give you thoughtful insight. Yes, it takes boldness and humility to do this, but it's information that can guide your future career.

Once you receive the feedback, analyze it. Is it accurate? Are the answers in line with what you thought about yourself? Do you like the feedback? Using the replies you received from people, decide where you need to make changes in your approach and what you want to be known for in the company. Then take the steps to be the type of leader you want to be.

- **Start building social capital right away.**

Leaders have willing followers. A good leader knows how to get things done without formally delegated authority. A superb leader has built social capital and knows how to spend it. Social capital is about doing appropriate things to help others do their job. Can you offer assistance on a project or give people needed information? If so, and if you offer it, then you're building social capital.

One of the ways to get social capital is during meetings with your new executive peer group. Keep notes on every peer. Write down everything you learn about them. And if you learn something new in a meeting, go back immediately and write it down. It's not possible to remember all of this. As the old adage says, "The palest ink is better than the best memory." To be a successful leader, you have to learn about your new peers, and you have to learn the functions of their areas and how their function is tied to what you do. And yes, it is tied; otherwise you wouldn't be on the executive team.

Social capital is something you can spend, but you can't spend it if you don't have it. Therefore, always offer to help your peers. If there's something you're specifically good at, and you know how to get some information that they mentioned in a meeting or in passing, say, "I can help you with that!" That will build social capital.

There are a lot of studies on reciprocity, and reciprocity is done in every culture in the world. You give somebody something; they give something back to you. That's just the way the world works. So if you haven't done anything for anyone, then you don't have any chips to cash in when you need something. Then, when you're up at eight o'clock one night at the office and you need something from another department, if you don't have that social capital built, it's going to be really hard to call them at eight or nine at night and ask them to come back up and help you.

Make the Switch Today

Moving into a leadership position is both exciting and challenging. You begin to stretch to reach new levels of achievement while letting go of tasks that brought you to your current level of success. It's a time to reinvent yourself with a new peer group while perhaps transitioning into a new persona for those you've worked with for years. By all accounts, it's a time for change and personal and professional growth. Make the most of this time and transition wisely, as doing so will reap the greatest rewards for both you and your company.

Visit www.jeankelley.com for more information on Jean Kelley's consulting services. You can also find Jean on Twitter at www.twitter.com/jeanmkelley or on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/jeanmaslankakelley.