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“Just wait ‘til I’m the boss...”

That sentiment has helped sustain many aspiring entrepreneurs through the process of getting their small businesses up and running. Among the many benefits of small business ownership is the opportunity to do things “the right way” when it comes to employees and customers.

Once in charge, however, many small business owners find that leading, managing, and motivating others involved with the business aren’t as easy as they sound. One reason is widespread confusion about the difference between “managing” and “leading.” Leadership experts say they are two very different roles, even though most small business owners consider them the same.

“Managing” implies structure, control, rules, deadlines and efficiency, says Ken Blanchard, best-selling author of *The One Minute Manager*. But according to Blanchard, “leadership” is nearly the opposite of “management.” Leading requires actions that are more experimental, unstructured, visionary, flexible and passionate. Managers and leaders think and behave differently.

Blanchard and his partner Drea Zigarmi spent seven years studying how business leaders exert influence and how their values, beliefs and personalities contribute to their success — or failure. Through it all, one finding was clear: A one-size-fits-all style of leadership does not exist.

Owning a business automatically puts you in a position of leadership. Your goal is to engage employees, partners, vendors, investors, independent contractors or other

participants in your venture in a course of action that helps achieve a mutually shared vision. But being in a leadership position does not necessarily make you a leader.

Many entrepreneurs turn to management techniques to enlist the minds and muscles of the people they lead, but fail to capture an equally important component — their hearts. If you merely work to focus activities of followers and fail to engage them in a purpose, you won’t likely be seen as a good leader.

“The first step to becoming a better leader is to study yourself and get honest, unfiltered feedback about how you are doing from the people you lead,” says Blanchard. “You cannot effectively lead if you do not know your own values.”

Learning when and how to provide direction (defining roles, setting goals and priorities, scheduling, and evaluating results), and support (seeking input, listening, offering praise and encouragement, sharing information, explaining decisions, and helping others solve problems) is an ongoing process for even veteran small business owners. Employees, vendors, and customers all change; you need to make your leadership skills flexible as well.

For more leadership ideas, contact SCORE “Counselors to America’s Small Business.” SCORE is a nonprofit organization of more than 10,500 volunteer business counselors who provide free, confidential business counseling and training workshops to small business owners. Call 610.327.2673 for the Pottstown SCORE office, or visit www.pottstownscore.org.



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