

# The COIN Framework

By Joe Whitefield

Leadership is about taking people and organizations from one place to another. These journeys are typically necessary and often difficult. Leaderless journeys can be described as drifting - casually moving with no direction, or stampeding - a high energy sprint with no direction. Either way, they are an accident waiting to happen. Leaders have the privilege of serving others by providing vision and direction, an initial plan to get there, and the course correction techniques required to stay on the proper course. Leadership calls on the best qualities of someone to establish priorities, understand the trade-offs, and head up the endeavor. To that end, leadership development is itself a journey.

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Managers everywhere often struggle with the management-leadership balance in serving their organizations. Let's review. Management is a logical approach to decision making and problem solving. It typically involves appropriating the proper resources (money, materials, and manpower) to the task. We use terms like effective, efficient, and compliant when assessing this practice.

Leadership, on the other hand, involves moving people from one place to another and inspiring them to engage in and contribute to the process and not simply be spectators. Leadership requires an emotional connection between individuals and thus draws on personal qualities such as trust, competence, supportiveness, encouragement, and even humility. Managers must lead people and manage processes. This sounds simple enough. But, like many things,

simple is not always easy. Management and leadership will be forever intertwined in spite of their distinctness.

Higher education institutions need both the effectiveness and compliance outcomes that come from good management and the innovation and excellence that comes from inspiring leadership. Facilities managers seeking to improve their organizations should begin with accessing their ability to recognize the difference in management and leadership situations. Certain situations call for applying management techniques, others call for applying leadership skills, and still others call for a mixture of both. I contend that good leaders are better at this recogni-

to a culture of compliance — standards are met or not and punishments/rewards are handed out or not. This often requires much more management than leadership. Conversely, personal authority is a product of one's ability to influence and guide others without the disciplinary stick. Decisions and directives motivated from personal authority contribute to a culture of excellence.

Individuals and team members often have a greater sense of ownership and care for the quality of the finished product. Doing the minimum to meet a standard is replaced with doing the best you can. Leadership is required more than management because teamwork and cooperation are not mandated by

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tion/response process than mediocre leaders — great leaders are even better than good leaders.

The management-leadership balance is better understood when you consider the nuisances of authority as they relate to management and leadership. Positional authority is a product of one's organizational rank. Direct reports follow their supervisors' directives as a requirement of the position. Failing to do so could result in a negative consequence or disciplinary action.

Decisions and directives motivated from positional authority contribute

organizational rank or position. There are times when positional authority, appropriately exercised, is the best means to accomplish the task. However, personal authority is the key to strong leadership and should be exhibited and drawn upon as much as possible. In fact, personal authority can be, and often should be, exercised extensively by a person with positional authority in a given situation.

So, commit to improving these areas of competency for yourself. Commit to help others in your organization improve these areas too. To assist with this struggle

and the commitment to improve, let me recommend an organizational framework. It draws on four broad areas of an organization's culture. It can assist the facilities manager with leadership/management assessments and appropriate responses. This framework is summarized with the acronym **COIN**: *Completion, Organization, Innovation*, and being *Nice*.

**Completion** speaks to an individual's and organization's ability to get things done by finishing the task(s). Facilities management departments are "can do" by nature and design. However, we often think of this in terms of time driven, compliance-oriented activities only. The ability to get things done has a hidden value in that it can produce energy for the people doing the work. Completing tasks, or sometimes simply seeing the finish line, is a great motivator for people. And motivation is jet fuel for organizations and teams.

**Organization** speaks to the alignment of assets, resources, and personnel to accomplish the work. Being organized is important to accomplishing goals and objectives effectively and efficiently. Processes and systems should help, not hinder, people in performing their work. Systems with too much dependency and too many variations create drag and inefficiencies leading to subpar work and demotivated or frustrated employees. Improved organization can turn the negatives around.

**Innovation** speaks to the critical thinking skills and creative contributions of people to make things better. Look for ways to break the cycle of "routineness." Invitations to innovate can inspire people to engage and contribute. Not only can this lead to great ideas to be implemented, it can also lead to an improved atmosphere for the routine work that remains.

**Nice** speaks to the culture of respect and civility that encourages positive interactions between peers, coworkers, customers, and business partners. It creates a positive environment and enhances the unspoken/unwritten emotional contracts that are vital to personal leadership. It also works best if it is authentic — it is kind of hard to fake.

These statements only scratch the surface of these organizational issues. Consider your experiences within each of the COIN areas. How have they affected the overall effectiveness of your organization and the management-leadership balance. ☞

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