



The first 1001 days: Leading or managing? Both or neither?

Andy Curtis reviews his first 1,001 days as a leader/manager.

Introduction

“ONCE upon a time, in the city of Basrah, there lived a prosperous tailor who was fond of sport and merriment”. So begins the narratives which first appeared in written form around 850 C.E. (Christian Era), told by Shahrazad in an attempt to save her life. The tales include “The Young Woman and Her Five Lovers”, “The Tale of Kafur the Black Eunuch” and one of my personal favourites, “The Historic Fart”. Welcome to the *Tales from the Thousand and One Nights*. According to the Penguin Classics reprint edition (1973): “The stories are a mix of Arabic, Persian, and Indian tales and appear to have been written in response to classical Arabic literature... They are aggressive and highly sexualized, and are loaded with sorcery, fantasy, and criticism of authority figures.” So, a clear connection with some key aspects of leadership and management.

My own 1001 nights finished mid-June 2005 and this article is based on the notes I took on the lessons I learned during those first long, 1001 days and nights.

Context

The Queen’s University School of English (QSoE) is one of the longest-established schools of its kind in North America, having started as a small English language summer school in 1942, when most of the course participants appear (from old photos) to have been young clerics. Now the School is a year-round IEP, with a 12-week core EAP program, which runs three times a year, a five-week oral/aural Canadian culture summer program and a series of customized or tailored programs. We also work with international graduate teaching assistants and

international faculty at the university. Before the current downturn, we have usually welcomed up to 1,000 international students from more than 30 countries every year, working with a staff of around 20 fulltime and part-time teachers and 10 administrative support staff.

Like most university English language schools and programs, we are “zero-base funded”, which is modern university biz-speak for “generate your own damn funding cos you’re not getting a penny from us”. As such, we have to cover all of our operating costs, which are one-millions-plus Canadian dollars (approx. 800K US\$) and, if possible, generate a surplus. (For more details on the School see queensu.ca/soe).

Queen’s University and the School of English are located in the province of Ontario, in the city of Kingston (population approx. 150,000), which is half way between Toronto and Montreal, at the eastern end of Lake Ontario, less than half-an-hour away from the edge of the state of New York.

Managing and/or Leading

Two of the things I have found most puzzling comparing the literature I have read over the last three years with my “lived experiences” (van Manen, 1990) during that same period is:

- a) the way a good deal of the literature seems to present managers in a negative light, whilst presenting leaders positively, and
- b) the tendency to dichotomize, either you are a leader or you are a manager – and if you are a manager, you should really want to stop being a manager and become a leader as soon as you can.

Why? If you are reading this article, you are probably a member of the IATEFL Special Interest Group on **ELT Management** not the SIG on **ELT Leadership**, and yet the two most recent (prior) issues of this newsletter (35 and 36) contained three articles focusing explicitly on aspects of leadership (Yucel, 2004; Underhill, 2005; Bress, 2005).

The following table, taken from Jim Clemmer's book *The Leader's Digest* (2003), is a good example of the kind of dichotomies that appear to have grown up around notions of Leadership Vs Management.

Management	Leadership
Processes	People
Facts	Feelings
Intellectual	Emotional
Head	Heart
Position power	Persuasion power
Control	Commitment
Problem solving	Possibility thinking
Reactive	Proactive
Doing things right	Doing the right things
Rules	Values
Goals	Vision
Light a fire under people	Stoke the fire within people
Written communications	Oral communications
Standardization	Innovation

Another example comes from Building Brands, which quotes the past CEO of Apple, John Scully: "Leadership is often confused with other things, specifically management. You have to be capable of inspiring other people to do things without actually sitting on top of them with a checklist – that's management not leadership".

A third example is from Jill Geisler, a Leadership and Management Group Leader at the Poynter Institute in Florida, who compares and contrasts two leading leadership gurus. The first is John Kotter, a leadership expert at Harvard Business School and author of ten books on leadership over a 20 year period, from 1982 to 2002, including *What Leaders Really Do* (1999) and *The Leadership Factor* (1988). The other is Warren Bennis, Distinguished Professor of Business Administration and founding chairman of the Leadership Institute at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business. He is the author of nearly 20 books on leadership, including *On Becoming a Leader* (1994) and *Why Leaders Can't Lead* (1997). Here is Geisler's summary table:

A manager...	A leader...
John Kotter	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · copes with complexity · plans and budgets · organizes and staffs · controls and problem-solves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · copes with change · sets a direction · aligns people · motivates people
Warren Bennis	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · promotes efficiency · is a good soldier · imitates · accepts the status quo · does things right 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · promotes effectiveness · is his or her own person · originates · challenges the status quo · does the right thing

(poynter.org)

Continua versus Dichotomies

Although I have found these kinds of tables useful – especially when I had to spend my second year revising the job description so it could be upgraded – I expect most of us in this kind of position find that we are often need to be doing both. So, to take Clemmer's tables as an example, I am often managing processes, but those processes are not being carried out by machines; they are based on action being taken by people. I have had to have many difficult discussions as the School has experienced more change in the last three years than in the previous 20, so I work with enrolment and other kinds of data, i.e., I manage facts. But when I have presented these facts to my staff, they react emotionally and at the heart-level, as well as the intellectual, fact-processing head level. When I am problem-solving, as an inherent part of that process, I must consider as many possibilities as I can. So, rather than following or constructing tables of 'A' versus 'B' or 'X' versus 'Y', I have learned to look for the grey areas, beyond black-and-white, to see where there is what I have come to call "positive overlap".

The second table is good example of what Joseph Rost, author of *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* (1993), challenges, which is the building up of leaders whilst running down managers. As Giesler puts it: "Rost criticizes those who 'denigrate management to enable leadership". How could an effective manager be little more than a copy, an imitation, mainly interested in short-term, bottom-line control? Kotter's work appears to agree with Rost's, in that they both believe that management is more related to "authority" and "leadership" more to do with influence, but again, it would be difficult for me to lead, if I did not have any authority.

Stephen Covey's work, such as *Principle-Centered Leadership* (1992), in the ebb and flow

of fashions and trends in this field, appears to be less popular now than it used to be, and is less and less cited. However, I have found his work to be consistently helpful over the last three years, as it seems to take quite a balanced view of the relationship between leadership and management. For example, two common quotations from Covey are: "Management works in the system; leadership works on the system" and "Effective leadership is putting first things first. Effective management is discipline, carrying it out". In this view, leadership and management are not seen so much in terms of better and worse, but more in terms of differences in position, perspective and purpose.

So, for me, one strategy that has been most useful to me over the last three years is to ask myself a series of questions at regular intervals, sometimes several times a day, or even several times during one meeting, if it is a difficult 'bad news meeting'. One key question is: am I leading or am I managing *at this moment*? This helps me know where I am on the continuum between "pure management" at one end and "pure leadership" at the other, which I consider to be theoretical end-points, not real positions. If I am managing, what am I managing to do? If I am leading, where are we going, why are we going there and how many different ways can we come up with together to get there?

Another approach that has helped me though those first 1001 days and nights is to try never to lose my sense of humour. On the few times that that has happened, I was not able to manage or to lead effectively. So, bearing in mind Adrian Underhill's recent discussion of "leadership and the feminine" (2005, p.10) and the almost all-female staff of QSoE, together with the theme of 1,000 (+1), I leave you with this leadership observation from Groucho Marx: "One man in a thousand is a leader of men – the other 999 follow women."

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