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If you have been assigned as a leader in your organization, you more than likely have been given a position with some authority. Perhaps you have a title for your position. Were you promoted to this position? Appointed? Voted in? Regardless how you landed the position, congratulations. It's a great accomplishment. Hopefully, your job description allows you to enforce rules and tell people to do their jobs--and reward or punish as needed.

Real leadership, though, is more than having granted authority. Real leadership is being a person others will gladly and confidently follow. Having a leadership position will gain you cooperation from others initially, but not long-term if you don't evolve as a leader. Real leaders know the difference between position and influence. There's a difference between being a boss and being a leader:

Bosses drive workers; leaders coach them. Bosses depend on authority; leaders depend on goodwill. Bosses inspire fear; leaders inspire enthusiasm. Bosses say, “I”; leaders say, “We.” Bosses blame after something breaks down; leaders fix the breakdo wn. Bosses know how it is done; leaders show how. Bosses say, “Go”; leaders say, “Let's go!”

Position is a good place to start in leadership, but it's a terrible place to stay. Anyone who never leads beyond their positional title depends on territorial rights, protocol, tradition, and organizational charts. These things are not inherently negative, but can be if they become the basis for authority. They are

## Don't be a positional leader

poor substitutes for leadership skills.

If you have been in a leadership position for any length of time, how do you know whether you are relying too much on your position when leading?

Here are three common characteristics of positional leaders:

1) *Positional leaders find security in their title more than in their talent.* This happens often when someone is appointed to position without any leadership experience. In the military, quite often lieutenants have to use their rank as a weapon to get things done (low ranking officers outrank high ranking enlisted members). A lieutenant's rank is often the only credential that drives a sergeant to take action. Strip away the ranks and the sergeant would probably be in charge.

2) *Positional leaders rely on their leader's influence instead of their own.* Quite often a positional leader will throw out the name of a higher leader in order to get others to follow their commands. They continually reference the big boss in their statements in order to influence others to think or act.

3) *Positional leaders can't get people to follow beyond their defined authority.* A common reaction of followers to positional leaders is to do only what's required and nothing more. People won't comply to do anything extra when asked; they won't stay late; they won't go out of their way; they will say, “That's not my job,”; they won't go above and beyond when you need them to. People are not committed to the vision or causes led by positional leaders.

If any of these characteristics describe

you, then you may be relying too much on your position, which means you need to work harder at cultivating influence. You have to get people to work for you when they are not obligated. You have to have people give you permission to lead them. This requires you to have good relationships with your people.

True influence begins with the heart, not the head. It flourishes through personal connections, not rules and regulations. The agenda is not the pecking order of who's in charge, it should be about people connection. Leaders who succeed focus their time and energy on the needs and desires of the individuals on their team. People who are unwilling or unable to build solid, lasting relationships soon discover that they are also unable to sustain lasting, effective leadership. Needless to say, you can care about people without leading them, but you cannot lead people well without caring about them. People won't go along with you if they cannot get along with you.

As you connect with people, build relationships with them, and earn their trust, you can start to influence them to think and work in a direction that is beneficial to the overall mission. Before you know it, people will go the extra mile when you need them to.

If you've been given a leadership position, then you've been given your boss's permission to lead. If you've created enough positive relationships, then your people will also give you permission to lead them--and that's when you start becoming an effective leader.

~ The End ~