

How do you know if you're a successful leader? Regardless of your title, two things are true if you're really a leader:

- 1) Someone is following you. No followers, no leader. Following under compulsion (like just to get a paycheck) doesn't count. People *choose* to follow true leaders.
- 2) You're going someplace. If you're going nowhere, you're not leading.

Leadership is inherently other-centric. You only succeed when your followers do. My followers should be more successful with me leading than if I wasn't. My success is multiplied when my followers become leaders whose followers are becoming leaders. As a student in a recent class commented, leadership is a "pyramid scheme".

Most organizational roles require some blend of leadership skills and management skills. While leadership is focused on developing people to their full potential, management is about driving for results. Management goals are usually easier to measure, which probably explains why management skills are often more fully developed than leadership skills.

When we *assign tasks* (mostly a management function), we usually know as soon as the task is done whether we successfully assigned it. It was either done right (we delegated well) or it wasn't (we didn't do well – although we're quick to blame our follower rather than accept that we didn't lead well. Surely we were perfectly clear with explanations tailored to the competency level of the person we assigned, right?)

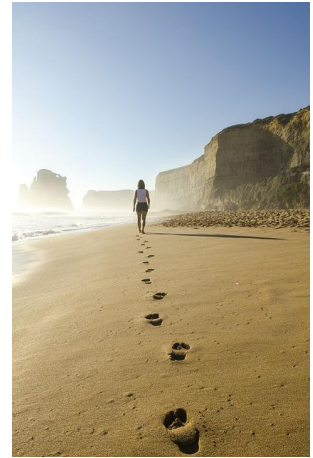
But our success at *developing people* may not be immediately obvious. Sometimes giving the freedom to fail at a task is a greater people development success than dictating how to succeed. It's not until we see our followers lead others that we know how well we've developed their leadership skills.

Further complicating measurement of our leadership success is that we don't always get to see the full development process. Like an elementary school teacher, we might have a season of influence but not always see the end result of our efforts.

So assessing our own leadership skills can be a challenge. Over the long term, success can be observed by the levels of leadership achieved by our followers. Employee retention rates can also serve as an indicator, since a person's direct leader is the number one cause of turnover and talent doesn't tend to stay where they're not growing and making a meaningful contribution.

In the short term, the energy, attitude, and teamwork with which your followers rise to meet challenges says a lot. Also consider the kinds of issues your followers seek you out for: Are they just coming to you for instructions and decisions or are they looking to you to guide their growth? Finally, if you've created a culture of continuous trust and transparency, you're already getting feedback from your followers that – if you can avoid the selective hearing and self-deception we're prone to – can identify your leadership strengths and weaknesses.

Leadership is an investment. It pays big dividends over the long haul.



enLumen Leadership Services: *Lighting your path to better leadership.*