Leader vs. Doer: Three Ways to Power Up Your Team

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If you're a "leader" now, I'll bet you were a great "doer" in the past. In fact, it was probably your great doer inclination to take charge and get busy that distinguished you and won you the opportunity to step up into leadership. Unfortunately, that same do-it-yourself attitude that made you a great doer can make you a lousy leader because leaders and doers are different and have very different perspectives on power and what to do with it.

Great doers are distinguished by their *direct* achievements, their ability to personally take the ball and run with it. They focus directly on the outcomes, amass their own power, roll up their sleeves and get busy using it. Great leaders, on the other hand, are distinguished by their *indirect* achievements, their ability to give the ball to someone else and then help them run well. Leaders focus on their people and build others' power and inclination to use it.

This distinction gets a little blurry in practice because most of us are both doers and leaders— we're like player-coaches who must switch between roles during our day— but in my experience, leaders who do not envision their roles as different than doers', often wind up confusing and competing with the men and women they lead. They still think like doers and inadvertently steal power from their people. They create dependencies instead of opportunities and become the limiters of their team's talents and capacity. Alternatively, leaders who rework the habits they learned as doers, reframe their use of power and create potent, independent teams that transcend the sum of their parts. Here are three counterintuitive tips to help you make the shift from doer to leader and power-up your people:

1. Stop Doing What Needs to Be Done

When you were a doer and you went the extra mile or stayed after hours, you might not have enjoyed it in the moment, but you felt a certain satisfaction in doing it. It felt good to be the hero and demonstrate your commitment to the cause. In time, some of these sacrifices have even become your personal badges of honor. Now, when these same moments arise, try to remember they are your team members' moments, not yours. If you dive in and do too much to deliver results yourself, you're usually taking that opportunity away from someone else, and your team members will quickly feel unnecessary, confused, frustrated or demeaned. You mean well, but the problem isn't your aspirations; it's your inability

to trust others with the responsibility of achieving them. If you want them to step up, you're going to need to step back, and this goes against every "doer disposition" you have. It often takes more courage to direct others than to do things yourself, but if you want to keep your team fired up, you need to ask them to step up before you do. Let them dig deep and be the heroes; it's their opportunity to shine.

2. Stop Answering Questions

When you're a doer, your ability to deliver answers is the source of your credibility, the measure of your effectiveness, and likely your ticket to the "big time." However, when you're a leader, your success rests less on how much you know than on how much your people know. That means you need them to provide the answers, and they tend not to do this if you're busily doing it yourself. Think of it this way: if you are too full of answers, you will eventually discover your team is too full of questions. Members will increasingly pass the critical choices on to you and wait for your direction, slowing everything down and shifting the power unproductively away from the people who need to be exercising it most. In short order, you will feel like your team moves only when you do. So, stop answering questions and start asking them instead. This doesn't mean you should stop offering feedback or guidance altogether— being clueless and disengaged is a pretty poor strategy for *both* leaders and doers. Instead, tailor your communication to prompt or improve your team members' own consideration. Give the kind of assistance that empowers them to find the answers for themselves.

3. Risk More on Other People's Work

When you're a doer, the quality of your own work represents you for better or for worse, but when you're a leader, your credibility rests on someone else's contributions. You rise and fall on the choices they make, and if you're uncomfortable with this, it's tempting to protect yourself by limiting the power or authority they have. You might give them only sham-choices where you've hedged your bets and allowed only the latitude for choices that won't matter. Or you might create a situation where the team is merely an extension of your own imagination, judgment and preferences. These tactics and might make you feel safer, more in control, but control is overrated. It limits even more than it protects. It keeps people small, and it keeps your team from stepping-up in the ways you want most. As a general rule, if you are confident that your people can't harm anything or dent your own reputation, you probably haven't given them enough power. Take the risk. If you need to ease your discomfort, do it by shaping the values and goals that guide their use of power rather than limiting their access to it altogether.

Ultimately, the shift from doer to leader is difficult because it sneaks up on you and feels like you're giving power away. You are, but this doesn't make you weak. It's a paradox that confounds any your doer dispositions. As a leader, you are weakest when you lean on your own sufficiency, and you grow stronger only when you give your power away.

The DOING DILEMMA
https://youtu.be/ZQPbTYkfM14

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