

Transcription - Case Study - Manager Is Not A Leader

Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. Today, we have a case study that Fulyana is going to outline.

This case study is from someone who said "I am fortunate enough to be working for a manager who is brilliant, so is the management team, but I feel they're not good leaders, my manager and the leadership team are not good leaders. How do I tackle that?"

I think with this, the answers are, from me, all questions. The questions are for you to consider. First of all, we need to know the organization and the context. Is this a huge well-established organization? Is it a startup? Is it a new group? It sounds to me like it's a smaller organization so that we have to make assumptions before we go ahead. The other thing is, the question I would ask, it's interesting that you use the term brilliant and poor leaders. In trying to know what's brilliant, why is it brilliant and how would you describe that brilliant? And what is poor leadership and what do you expect? What do you expect from good leadership and what does that look like to you? These are starting points.

I have another question that is about, are they not good leaders or are they not good managers? Because they're two different things. We can talk about both, obviously. I just wonder whether we throw the term leadership out there looking for a place to put responsibility, whereas if we're talking about managers, then they've got a bit more of a, to me, they have a bit more of a hands-on approach to what is being done.

When I hear that term leadership coupled with brilliant at what they do, then to me, they sound like they're subject matter experts for want of a better phrase and that they're very adept and skilled at that knowledge base. They've been thrown into an environment where that's not used as much as these other human type skills that need to be used. Perhaps there was no time for them to get trained. Perhaps they're not interested in being leaders, managers, whatever else it is. I'm doing the air quotes with my fingers as I say it.

It's an intriguing question because I think we, nine and a half years we've been doing this podcast to 10 years in June next year, and constantly, in all of that time, we have circled back to the difference between leadership and management in all sizes of organisations, in all types of organisations. So it is an ongoing issue. It is an area where I think we increasingly, because of the changes to the way we work, we have experts who have small to medium size organisations, they kick off and they run away with themselves. You get all of the support staff to make things happen, hoping that somehow the management will fall into place. Because you know everyone, you've grown with them and I'm sure we had a guest a little while back who talked about the difference between managing a startup and managing an established organisation, and the difference between leading those two types of organisations and being the entrepreneurial leader. You can't be an entrepreneurial manager necessarily. I don't think in my definitions anyway. So it is an interesting question because of what you've identified is that they're brilliant at something that they're doing, but not so good at the people side of it, shall we say.

That would be my interpretation as well. So if you look at the leadership, from all our

experience, it seems to be when people are talking about not happy about leadership, it seems to be more about people interaction. It's more about the human leadership rather than, and particularly saying brilliance, and I'll know here we have to fill in the gaps, but maybe they brilliant because they have a great idea, they created a great business. They're growing the business on that level, they're doing a really good job. But in communicating with the staff, maybe in having those interactions, maybe that is, they could be either not natural at it, or they could be time poor at it. What I would say again, with knowing very little about their organisation and your situation as a listener, I would say this is a great position to be in. That's nothing to worry about. This is absolutely wonderful. If they've got the vision, if they've got, they're creating this, and you're part of something exciting and growing, that's why you called them brilliant, the poor leadership, why don't you step up?

There's an opportunity there, they probably like it and trust you to step up, you can step up in a way that, I guess, doesn't change the dynamic. So you think they're not communicating enough? Share that, share the communication, put some structure in place where you can communicate amongst yourselves. To me, that will give you a really, really good way of growing faster by doing that. At the same time you've got the advantage of the company growing.

I think the thing that I worry about is that when you've got that going on in an organisation sometimes, not always, there's a tendency to talk amongst yourselves and say, "Oh my God, they're hopeless, you'd think they would be better." Please don't do that because that doesn't solve anything. What will happen is you're creating negativity with that solution and if the leadership team said, "Oh Mary, Jane, Bob Smith is hopeless." How is that going to help them? It doesn't and it's bad form. So I think back to your favourite thing Kim, communication, which is really the key to everything. You can communicate, communicate, come up with solutions and don't try to fit them into your definition of an ideal leader. Just look at the whole situation.

Well, it's such a charged term and I think the starting point really is to put down what you think the organisation needs as a good leader. What qualities are you looking for in a good leader for the organisation? Not for you particularly, not for anyone else in the team particularly, but what does the organisation, what qualities in a leader does the organisation need? So if it's good communication, if it's the ability to manage the human resources side of it, to pick the right person for the right task. So much of it comes back to communication that it's hard to pinpoint other things.

These people who are so brilliant and so focused on what they're expert at, they don't understand that some people might not be able to work at 100% some days. Do they just ignore the personal interactions that people might be having or that the struggles with resources or the time that it might take some things to get done? So just ignoring all of that and barreling forward on wherever they're going with their brilliant idea, for me, it would be about saying, give me the qualities that you're looking for in good leadership for this organisation, for the tasks that we have to do for the environment that we're in, for the economic and geographical and business needs as well. And then out of that perhaps what happens is that you can see that someone's got that quality. They don't necessarily want to be a leader but they're in the team and they've got that quality. Then you have a session where everybody sits down and they look at the qualities that you've identified and you're all

on the level playing field. You set aside some time that is away from the work area, not necessarily the work environment and everyone is part of the discussion. Just sitting around table, here are the qualities that we think are good in a leader for this organisation. So and so is really good at this. Can we give them a chance to take on that responsibility for that quality?

If you don't think that you've got someone who's brilliant at a particular thing that is the basis for the business being there, which sounds like it is, you can't change them into being a manager or a leader because if they wanted to be that they would have developed the skills along the way. So you have to show them what the skills are and they might pick and choose the skills that they'd like to develop. I'm working with an organisation at the moment where there is a managing director who I genuinely don't think will ever be a manager or a leader because he's just not interested in the skills that are needed in those kind of roles. But he loves the title managing director and he loves to go in and say that he's the managing director.

He loves to spend time doing the things that will distract him from doing the things he doesn't want to do. That's who he is. He's young, I say very young, he's in his 30s so that's very young to me, younger than my youngest child, so he's very young. I've been doing this for longer than he's been alive. That's one of the reasons that he wanted the help but I'm at a point where I'm going to have to say to him unless you want to do these things, unless you want to be this person that goes with the title managing director, there's no point in you trying to fill out the day in this situation. In terms of this the case study, he needs the qualities for the organisation to be identified and everyone needs to sit down and say, "Okay, have we got these qualities in the team?" Can someone take on that part of it and then by association, by watching someone who is good at that particular thing, these people who are the current leaders/managers might, by osmosis, take on some of that information. It's about learning in a safe environment, learning within the organisation, within the product that they've identified, the business that they've developed.

I just think that there's opportunity there but it's got to start with the identification. I think that we've got to get away from thinking leadership is all the responsibility of the CEO and the director of the board. Leadership comes from any chair. That's why you get together, identify, see who's got that skill. You can be a leader, no matter what position you're in if you have that mindset. Then you start identifying it and making it work.

The other thing is, staff may think maybe that person is actually a fantastic leader because his or her approach is saying, "I don't want to start with them. I don't want to tell them what to do and do it my way." It maybe that, so unless you talk and unless you identify and you won't be able to say, "Oh, I see what you're saying. We could do this. I can put that in place.

You may be in a vacuum, maybe this lack of leadership is seen as, "We don't know what's happening." Let's look at what to do with that. A leader might say, "Well, I don't know if I'm doing okay. There's no feedback. I don't know where is my next career steps." Okay, then we know what it is. Who's going to do what about that? Until you get to that instead of abstract, the brilliant but not good leaders, and then help them and help ourselves by saying, "Well, I cannot put that in place on my own. Would anybody like to work with me on that?"

It's very much about the change in the business environment that allows the entrepreneurial

thinking to start a business, to have it go, and not everything is the grand corporation, but the opportunity to pursue single ideas, to make a difference, is there now more than it has ever been. We have to acknowledge that that brings with it a whole different range of management discussions and issues,

but it still comes back to some basic stuff. Like most things, floral art came into my mind then, because at its basis, it's about the principles and elements of design, and they apply to absolutely every design genre that you can think of, not just floral art, not just art, not just engineering, not just architecture. So, you know, they're in nature as well. In this instance, I think we've got to go back to the principles and elements of management, and of leadership as two separate things, because they are two separate things, and then just look at the qualities, and then have the discussion about who's got these qualities. And if you haven't got them, if no one in the team has got them, but you think that they are important, then find out how you can get them, or how you can learn them. You know, someone might be keen to develop their skills in that area, and then share them with the rest of the group. What it does is brings everyone together thinking, we're moving forward. We're focused on this goal, we're helping one another, we're helping the organisation, we're not picking holes, we're not saying you're not good at this, and you need to fix it. It's everyone taking responsibility, and everyone being part of the moving forward.

Oh, good, she's got nothing more to say. Well, you know, on this topic anyway. Let's not get ahead of ourselves! I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.