

How managers become leaders

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From running a function to leading a business unit, is a challenging transition. In the new role, the scope and complexity increase dramatically. Executives going through the transition must transform themselves in various ways:

They must become deep generalists who understand all the functions.

They have to hire, judge and interact with a much larger variety of people.

They must move seamlessly between the details and the big picture.

They must become skilled at organization design and ensure that strategy, structure and operating model are well aligned.

From problem solvers, they must become agenda setters, being able to define the problems the unit must focus on.

They must learn to proactively shape the environment by influencing key external stakeholders.

They must become role models and be proficient at communicating with and inspiring a large number of people.

A large part of the transition from manager to leader involves moving from left brain analytical thinking to right brain conceptual thinking. This does not mean that details are no longer important. But leaders must increasingly delegate details to competent direct reports and free up time to focus on the larger issues.