

Leadership Philosophy

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Leadership has many definitions and comes in different styles, yet Schein notes a common underlying notion, “leadership creates and changes cultures, while management and administration act within a culture” [1]. That is, while both leadership and management are necessary practices in any organization, they serve different purposes. Leaders effect change and mould the system whereas managers use the rules and authority of the system to obtain results. Leadership is thus particularly important because it can and must be practised no matter one’s title, role, rank, or authority.

Scope of Leadership Philosophy

My philosophy of leadership is designed around the leader-engineer. That is, the person who possesses technical knowledge and design thinking, combines this with the ability to optimize teams and processes, but maintains an innovative high-level vision or mission, in order to create positive change.

Principles of Leadership

My approach to leadership focuses on open communication, collaborative team culture, mutual accountability, and high performance to achieve ambitious external goals. It is best suited to solving complex technical and people problems involving multiple distinct stakeholders. My leadership philosophy is best summarized as **leading by expertise, example, and empathy**, as opposed to by authority, ego, or control. The core principles are:

1. **Leadership is the skill and practice of influencing people to make positive change.** It begins with self-awareness, and—guided by values, vision, and vitality—serves to inspire, empower, and influence others, teams, organizations, and society.
2. **Leadership and management are distinct and equally necessary.** Management is authoritative, top-down, and driven by productivity and organizational needs. Leadership is more empathic, inclusive, and driven by a holistic consideration of organizational needs and the needs of the stakeholders served by the organization.
3. **Engineering leadership consists of three key elements:** technical mastery; process and team optimization; organizational innovation. These dimensions are derived from Rottman et al. [2].
4. **Leadership can be practised by anyone, in any position.** Leaderly behaviour is characterized not by one’s title but by the attitude, knowledge, and skills to inspire, empower, and influence.
5. **Leadership must be practised by everyone, in all positions.** People must believe in themselves and their agency to influence and take pride in their contributions in order do their best work.
6. **Leadership learning occurs through various means,** such as reflection, experience, research, mentorship, and facilitated workshops. This learning also never stops because teams never stop facing new opportunities and risks which force them to grow and adapt.
7. **Leaders are not perfect but good leaders share their personal development journey with their teams,** and are committed to the development of their team members. Only then can continuous improvement and a high-performance culture be achieved.

References

- [1] E. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, 2016.
- [2] C. Rottmann, R. Sacks and D. Reeve, "Engineering Leadership: Grounding Leadership Theory in Engineers' Professional Identities," *Leadership*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2015.