

Moving from Where You Are to Where You Need to Be

By Julius E. Rhodes, SPHR

THERE IS A FAMOUS ROLLING STONES SONG that says, “You can’t always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you find you get what you need.”

This song made me think about how we must take an opportunity to examine the differences between wants and needs and how that distinction plays into the difference between being a leader and leadership. We all have wants, and usually those wants come into play when we compare ourselves to others or see something and think, “Hey, I want that, too.”

A dear friend of mine just purchased a Maserati. It is a beast of a car, and that’s what we call it—the Beast. When you start that engine or even look at it under the hood, you quickly realize you ain’t in Kansas no more. Being a confessed speed junkie, as soon as I had a chance to sit in that vehicle and feel its immense power, I wanted one. But let’s think about this: What is the purpose of a car? It’s to get you from point A to point B and move you from where you are to where you need to be.

A want is a luxury item; it’s a nice to have, but it’s not an essential. I want a Maserati, but what I need is reliable transportation that’s consistent with my economic reality. It’s out with the \$110,000+ Maserati and in with a solid used domestic vehicle. Oh, well.

Another way of thinking about the distinction between wants and needs is soda. At the end of a long, tiring day, I want a carbonated beverage, but what my body really needs is water. I’m dehy-



drated, and no amount of soda or pop, from a life perspective, will ever really quench my thirst or sustain me.

Leaders and Leadership

What does this have to do with the distinction between leader and leadership? Each year there are more than 2,000 books written that address leadership or being a leader. That there is a lot of room for interpretation and no clear Holy Grail.

In the workplace, a leader is someone who has a formal title or role and responsibility for others executing their job responsibilities. At any point, everyone can be a leader. The receptionist needs to act as a leader for those with whom she or he comes in contact face-to-face, via electronic communication,

or by phone. So it more about what you do than the title.

Anybody can do anything once—that doesn’t make you a success. You need to be able to attain and sustain a consistent level of performance in a period of time. I talk about leadership as consistently displaying a range of traits or attributes that identify you in as someone with staying power.

Leadership is less about what you do and more about who you are and what people see in you most often. A leader is akin to a want because we always want the members of our team to lead when called upon. However, if our firms are to sustain long-term successes, we need to make sure people do things consistently and display a range of leadership traits; we want our organizations to be the types of places where who you are and the needs you fill regularly are more important than what you might do on occasion.

Getting to where you need to be versus where you want to be is about collaborating, not competing. And so it is with distinguishing wants from needs and being a leader from leadership. To be seen as people who consistently display leadership traits, we need to connect and engage with others on a consistent basis. When we do this, everyone benefits. [P](#)



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