

# Estimate of the Situation

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## Management vs. Leadership

The traditional hospital culture generates powerful barriers to change. That culture is defined by the perceptions and beliefs of physicians, managers, and employees. Reshaping those perceptions and beliefs is the essential first step in successful change management.

The perceptions and beliefs that shape the traditional hospital culture are rooted in the experiences of the people who hold them.

Consider the too-often disregarded differences between leadership and management:

- *Leadership* is the ability to generate support among others.
- *Management* is the systematic performance of certain defined tasks (planning, organizing, directing and controlling) to obtain a specific result within a defined time frame.

In the best of all worlds all managers would be effective leaders and all leaders would be effective managers but this is often not the case. Hospital department managers are far more likely to be natural leaders than trained managers. Department heads are often promoted to reward superior performance in their profession or technical field of choice with little or no management training.

Unfortunately, even total mastery of a profession or technical specialty and the possession of natural leadership ability does not confer management competence. Moreover, successful performance of the management function requires development of a particular mind set and operating focus.

- Professionals and technical experts have been taught to focus their attention on process at a level of precise detail whether the field is surgery, accounting, or radiography.
- Managers must focus more broadly on outcomes, delegating the detail to others.

Thus the professional or technician who aspires to management success must first “unlearn” the hard-earned ability to focus on detail and the “hands on” work habits that earned the promotion to management in the first place!

This can be a difficult transition to make.

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