

LEADERSHIP TASKS AND ROLES - INPUT

INTRODUCTION

“Great” leadership and management work is quite complicated and context-specific. Both responsibilities overlap each other and fall into typical interrelated roles (Northouse, 2013). As individuals called to leadership, we might realize that we commonly play more than one role at once. **Our capacity to perform these roles effectively is rarely developed in a classroom.** Quite on the opposite, these roles are perfected on the job, enhanced by a variety of experiences and challenges and by ongoing inquiry and reflection. While roles and tasks may seem very operational and functional, it is the way we relate to them that will make the difference. An element that is very distinct about the Ignatian way of proceeding is the particular meaning and sense of purpose we bring to our roles. The leadership we propose is religiously motivated, what matters is not just professional competence, but also a particular vision of why we are doing things. Ignatian spirituality offers us important resources for helping us stay grounded in that vision.

MAIN IDEAS

To enter this vast field we can start by analysing empirically the reality of leaders by asking ourselves: “What are the **demands** an institution makes to the people responsible for it?”. You have probably heard more than once one or several of the following statements:

- “That he/she resolves problems and crisis”
- “That he/she improves things”
- “That he/she raises funds and assigns resources where needed”
- “That he/she understands what the whole thing is about”
- “That he/she keeps us informed”
- “That he/she explains (and sells) what we do”
- “That he/she represents us”
- “That he/she is well connected (good network of contacts)”
- “That he/she orients and motivates each member of the team”
- “That he/she is able to establish the necessary management systems”

Another perspective is “What can I, as responsible for the institution, **offer** to make things happen?”. Among the answers we find we can do several things (Mintzberg):

- Causing things to happen through direct action (doing)
 - Taking the lead in initiatives, projects, managing conflicts
 - Negotiating agreements, alliances...
- Causing things to happen through the relation with other people:
 - Leading, orienting, and motivating the own team
 - Linking the organisation with its context (through a network of relations)
- Causing things to happen through the handling of information:
 - Monitoring (as the neuralgic center of information) and diffusing information inside and outside the organisation (or unit)
- Causing things to happen through management systems:
 - Developing management systems and control mechanisms that have effect in the behaviour of individuals: strategies, structures, MBO, etc.

Thus we see that managers have **many different roles** to play in their organisation: communicating, controlling, leading, linking, monitoring, doing, and dealing. These roles were proposed by Henry Mintzberg in 2009, unfortunately there is no agreement among experts on which ones are considered central roles to this activity (see handout for more information). What it is important to note is that we cannot decide to avoid a certain role, they are an inherent part of our work. In some contexts or positions one role will be more prominent than others but to a large extent every leader needs to be able to recognise them all in their work.

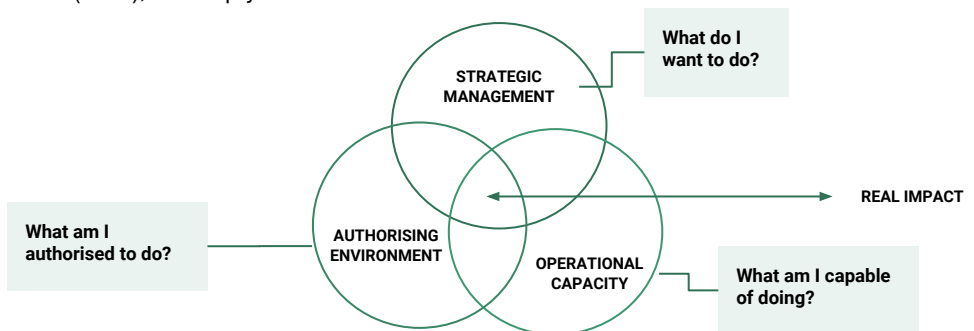
Having in mind this wide variety of roles, other things to keep in mind are:

1. **The way we relate to these roles:** Do I prefer one role to another? When am I called to set one role aside and take on another? Are there roles that I avoid and should be doing, or others that I adamantly confine myself in? Recognizing our biases and preferred orientations is key. Unless we bring someone who can compliment our work, we have to be intentional about growing our capacity to perform roles we don't particularly like or find natural.
2. **The way we perform these roles and integrate them together:** this will determine our leadership styles which are explained on another section.
3. **The skills and gifts needed to effectively perform these roles:** this relates to our leadership competencies which are explained on another section.
4. **The purpose of performing these roles:** basically, which results and what added value do they bring?

To look into this last point, it is useful to study the visible actions of leaders. However, when you observe these actions you can easily fall into a meaningless observation of why a person does something (call someone, walk-around, prepare an agenda, etc.). We need a certain degree of aggregation of these actions to find a more purposeful reason.

Movements / Actions	Activities / Tasks	Roles	Ends/Goals/Results
Looking at the phone catalogue, picking up the phone, dialling, talking, hanging up	Calling a superior	Communicating	Getting resources to launch a new project (added value)

If we do this exercise in detail for a large number of actions, we will be able to determine where the real impact of a leaders happens. The following figure, adapted from Mark Moore (1995), will help you understand this:



One of our main tasks should be to increase the area of real impact in the previous figure. According to Marc Moore we can do it through the three following ways:

- Help create or (re) define a strategy
- Develop internal capacity to manage this strategy: capacity to marshal human, financial, organizational factors, etc.
- Create an environment which “authorises” / supports / tolerates / fosters the management of the strategy defined

These topics will be addressed in modules 2 and 3.

IGNATIAN NOTE

Several of these roles presented in this section are people oriented while others are task oriented, this brings to mind the importance of two very relevant Ignatian concepts, *cura personalis* and *cura apostolica*. These concepts are often oversimplified as “care for the person” and “care for the institution/work”. They, however, contain deeper meaning, and they can be especially helpful in understanding how (or in what spirit) we can develop our leadership roles. Here are two passages to give a little more detail to both of these concepts but we recommend reading the texts suggested in the resources section:

- **Cura Personalis:** The idea for this concept comes from the *Spiritual Exercises*. It was Ignatius’ experience that on the path to God a person needs ‘cura’, the help of a companion on the way. **It is expressed in the human acts of ‘giving’ and ‘receiving’**, an act of transmission and consequently of reception. So the one who gives is impelled to give himself, without making himself a barrier, able to renounce in putting anything, and the one who receives is encouraged to act and react personally to the gift received, not being content to stay on the surface of impressions and feelings but sensing interiorly the gift received and savouring it in the depths of himself (Exx 2). Officially this term has several connotations, the one that particularly interests us is the duty of administrators and Jesuit superiors to show solicitude for individuals working in their institutions.
- **Cura Apostolica:** The idea for this concept comes from the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus. Actually, this concept was used with these terms officially until after Vatican Council II. It appears few times in official documents of the Society of Jesus. However, there are many instances in the *Constitutions* that refer to the safeguarding of the apostolic and ministry works. The idea is to show solicitude for the good of the institution as a whole. To put into practice the values and priorities linked to the mission. It needs to be balanced with *cura personalis*.

EXPECTED LEARNINGS AND OUTCOMES

1. Understanding better what leaders really do
2. Facilitating a reflection on one’s leadership roles
3. Learning about the value added of our work through our leadership roles
4. Introducing the concepts of *cura personalis* and *cura apostolica*

“If you find what you do each day seems to have no link to any higher purpose, you probably want to rethink what you’re doing.”

R. Heifetz