MC Forward Podcast
Season 3, Episode 1 – Part 1
Drs. Shinta Hernandez and Nancy Newton
Transcript

[MUSIC]

MIKE
Welcome to the third season of MC Forward, a podcast that focuses on Montgomery College individuals who are leading from where they are. I'm your host Dr. Michael Mills. We're going to kick off season three with something a little different, a two-part series talking about the differences between managing and leading. Joining me today is Dr. Nancy Newton, Grants Manager, and Dr. Shinta Hernandez, Dean of the Virtual Campus. Nancy and Shinta, I appreciate you joining me.

NANCY
Thank you for having me.

SHINTA
And thank you for having me.

MIKE
So, there's a lot of discussion, certainly at MC and… and in different venues, about the difference between managers and leaders. And I've got a couple of lists that I would have come across that I want to use as a jumping off point if I can. Leaders create a vision. Managers execute the vision. Leaders create change. Managers react to change. Leaders are people-focused. Managers are structure-focused. Leaders seek feedback. Managers minimize weaknesses. And finally, leaders lead people. Managers manage work. Shinta, you and I have had a lot of discussion over the past several years about the difference between leaders and managers, what do you make of that list?

SHINTA
I think it is spot on. Every time I am in a leadership development type of program, which I do just about every year, I get really excited when they touch on this. And I'm glad that they do touch on this because you're absolutely right that there are very distinct differences, and that is one of the common misconceptions of leadership and management is that they're two to the same things when they're actually very, very different. And also, um, along the same lines, there is that misconception, uh, that's widely known that people think that being in a leadership position means you're the boss and you make all the decisions and you are the head honcho of everything, and… and the way that it is presented makes it sound as if it is not transformational or inspirational. And an effective leader is someone who as you said in your list, someone who has a vision, someone who creates change, inspires people, builds and strengthens

teams, uses feedback to help mobilize resources and get the team to go it forward in the vision that that person has created.

MIKE
Nancy, what are your thoughts.

NANCY
I concur. So, yeah, I absolutely I agree. Um, I agree with everything that's on the list. I agree with what Shinta said, and I also think that sometimes people think that you need a position to be a, um, leader, but we know, you know, from your list and we know from… well, I know from experience and from readings that that's not the case. Um, and so, that distinction between managers and leaders is, I think, very valuable to have because people may think, well, I'm not in a position of leadership. Well, you are, but just because you don't have a title doesn't mean that you can't be in a position of leadership. Um, yeah.

MIKE
So, let me tell you the problem I have with the list, and I'm going to push back a little bit on this list because it to me creates this dichotomy between leaders and managers that I don't know always exist. So, for example, according to this list, leaders create a vision, managers execute the vision. It's saying to me that managers cannot create a vision. Do you… do you agree with that? Shinta?

SHINTA
I don't think it's necessarily that they cannot create a vision, I think sometimes it's within the scope of one's, um, position or experience. So, it is very likely that in some organizations, some companies' managers may not be given the responsibilities that allow them to stretch their creativity and imagination that lets them create a vision. They might be able to create a vision within their own scope, but typically, and again, this is just a generalization, that perhaps their experiences limit them.

MIKE
Nancy?

NANCY
Yeah, I would also say that, um, managers, I think of, oh, how do you say this? Managers tend, I think, to be more constrained by the status quo and the, almost, the hierarchy. But I… I absolutely think that good managers can have amazing leadership qualities. And, um, from that, like Shinta said, you can build a vision, but the… but just a… but there's always seems to be some kind of, not rubric, but path or position description or objectives and outcomes that managers… and benchmarks, that managers probably have to reach, you know, targets and what have you. Um, but it doesn't say that you can't be a good leader, but, if, you know, you're trying to differentiate between the two, I would, you know, I would say that, yes, a leader probably has more carte blanche to

create their own vision and go for it and take their team and inspire others to follow. Whether the manager may have that, but they may be a little more constrained in how they can go about it. So, possibly the leader is, okay, how and why can we do this? And the manager, like, what can we do within these confines?

MIKE
Shinta, you want to follow up with that?

SHINTA
Well, I really just, uh, echo the same… same sentiment here. I think, again, managers could very well have those qualities and those capabilities, but it is going back to the parameters of what that position entails and what that position is requiring them to do. And so, if we look at job ads. When you look at something that is a leader versus something that is a manager, sometimes it's very evident what their set of responsibilities are just based off of what their organization or corporation company tells them to do, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they cannot exercise those abilities.

MIKE
Well, that is a really good segue into this next list that I have. And the internet, if it is good for anything, it is an opportunity to find lists and comparisons. So, this one comes from the Organization, Next Generation. A manager gives direction. A leader asks questions. A manager has subordinates. A leader has followers. Manager holds authority. Leader is motivational. Manager tells you what. Leader shows you how. Manager has good ideas. And a leader actions good ideas. A manager reacts to change. A leader creates change. A manager tries to be a hero. And the leader makes heroes. And a manager exercise… exercises power while a leader develops power. A little different list than the first group that I… I gave you. Does anything jump out for you, Nancy?

NANCY
I think whenever you mention the word power in something, it's going to give it for me a negative connotation because it indicates that somebody has, you know, control over somebody else. Um, so, I'm not sure about adding that to both of the lists there. Um, and then, hero, this is quite a… quite a fanciful list that we have going on. [Laughs] Um… Yeah, that… that power word. I don't… I don't like the use of the word power and management or leadership to be honest. Um, even though I recognize, you know, we need some kind of order and semblance to enable us to get the work done, especially in the workplace. Power invokes control for me, not sure about you, Shinta.

SHINTA
Yeah, same, and so, as… as Mike was… was going down that list, it reminds me of this really powerful article or blog by Susanne Madden… Madison. Um, she wrote, for anybody who knows, I like to read a lot, so, um, she… she wrote this very, really great

book, um, The Power of Project Leadership, I think is what it's called. But if you just look her up Susanne Madison, and what she says in her article or blog is that leaders have a high level of emotional intelligence, and managers have a high level of cognitive intelligence. And so, Mike, when you were going down that list, more so for the leader side, things immediately, I thought the emotional intelligence piece of things. The inspirational, the, um, the being able to invoke change and have vision and all those. All those adjectives that you had stated reminds me of the elements or criteria under emotional intelligence indicators.

NANCY
And I would… I would agree, Shinta, that I think when I think about leaders, they appeal to… to the heart of people. And that's how, you know, you can almost get people to do something because it's something that interests them, and, you know, makes them feel something, whereas managers is more to the head, almost like you said, the cognitive side of things. So, yeah. Interesting.

MIKE
So, why do we want to dichotomize the two? When… when you said earlier, Nancy, I think, it was you who said managers can be leaders, but we want to put in a lot of business books, professional books. We want to put these in a separate basket, if you will. Shinta, why do we want to separate the two?

SHINTA
So, I'm going to put on my sociology hat for a minute and say that we as a universal society love, love to categorize things. It… it's as if we can't work around having a pigeon hole people in some boxes. We do that when we have our students apply. We put them in boxes in terms of their race or ethnicity. Same thing happens when on a job application form, on a census, um, US Census Bureau survey. We put people into categories. We think of things in boxes, and I think we've just conditioned our brains to think that way. And so, here we are talking about elements of leading and managing, and we're putting it into boxes as if you can't be, as if you can't have both or be both. So, that's my sociology soapbox for you.

NANCY
I was thinking the exact same thing, and this is something I noticed when I first came to the US, that the US loves a label. [Laughs] And we like to label everything in this country, but I also think that almost like the word manager evokes more of a, like you go back to that word of power, um, but you need… it's almost like in the workplace we need a manager because it instills in us, okay, somebody who's going to make sure everything gets done and make sure that we meet our targets, make sure that we are, you know, reaching all the students, we need to, um… and they're overseeing everybody else. Um, I wonder how it would be if we stopped using the word manager and started using the word leader. I wonder if there would be a difference in how, we as a society, approach things. Um, maybe it's something we could do at MC in one unit instead of

using, you know, Grant Managers… Grant Leader or something like that, just do a little sociological experiment and see what happens. Get on that, Shinta, right now. [Laughs]

SHINTA
I will do that right now! And a sociologist in me will say that if we do relabel things, we are likely to see some change. So, we'll get on it.

[Nancy laughs]

MIKE
Nancy, you brought up the international component. Is manager versus leader not a big deal overseas?

NANCY
Well, one thing you need to remember is that my… I came to the US when I was 29. And so, um, it is… manager is very widely used. Leader is used more in, say, political realms. Um, not so when I talk to my friends and family. I rarely hear them use the word leader in the workplace. I hear them talk about their managers. Um, but in the political sphere, it's always the leaders, as if, you know, we go back to that, you know, they attract… they instill something in your… in the feelings that makes you want to join on… jump on their bandwagon. Um, but, yeah, majority of my family and friends, I've heard just use the word manager as opposed to a leader in the workplace.

MIKE
I'm a big sports fan and I'm often amazed at how we label the person who is in charge of a team. In baseball, it's the manager. In football, it's the head coach. Is there a difference even if you throw the word coach in there now, between manager leader and coach? Shinta?

SHINTA
Well, in my in my brain because of the way we've conditioned our society, right?, with the labels, and what that means in my head when I hear the word head coach, I immediately think that this is the head honcho who gets to make all the decisions and corral a group of supporters and move in the direction that this coach wants them to move into. Whereas the word manager, again it's because of the way we've been conditioned, makes me think that this person has a… and going back to hierarchical structures, is lower on the hierarchy than the head coach even though it clearly is one in the same.

NANCY
It's also interesting because I just thought that I associated them with the games that you said. So, manager in baseball, and please forgive me for all the Americans who are listening, but do you need to really coach? Um, a lot in baseball, you could just sit there and, you know, swing a bat a little, [Laughs] but there seems to be more coaching that needed in football. Um, that's how I went. I didn't necessarily go back to the… that a

football team needed a manager, um, because maybe it was something more that is needed in the actual development of the players. But what do I know? I'm a real football fan.

MIKE
Well, but in baseball, the people under the manager are called coaches. I know, we're just blowing the…

NANCY
That's quite amusing. [Laughs]

MIKE
You're right. It is very confusing, but I think it also points out how we can… we try, as… as Shinta said, to put labels on… on things and it doesn't always make a lot of sense to do that. And it certainly doesn't make a lot of sense in the workplace, but we do it quite effectively there as well.

NANCY
I just think about, you know, I was an English as a, um, additional language teacher and for many, many years, and I think about the English language and for our learners of English and how, you know, how confusing this can be. It's confusing to us, um, how confusing it can be to somebody who's, you know, or even our employees who are, you know, employees who speak other languages. Um, you know, is that your manager, is my lead? You know, because you have a lead on a team sometimes. Oh, yeah. Well… it's confusing.

MIKE
Yeah, wnd when children are growing up, we will often say, oh, that person is a natural leader. We never say that person's a natural manager.

NANCY
That is true.

MIKE
So, it starts very early.

NANCY
Right. Yeah, and what makes the natural leader? The bossy person? You know. The person who's got all their friends around them. Many different, um, variations of leader as well.

SHINTA

And it reflects, again, how we think of managers versus leaders, that we put leaders on a higher pedestal than we do managers when we make those kinds of statements about children being natural born leaders instead of natural born managers.

MIKE
Do you want to be a manager or leader when you're younger? Do we aspire to be managers?

NANCY
I know I didn't

SHINTA
I think you want to have both. I think you certainly want to have the skill set that is dominant in both domains. So, the managers generally, as we've talked about throughout this, um, session already, managers are in control of the tasks, they're in control of facili… helping to make sure that the change happens so it can reach that vision. And then, you've got the leader skill set that is creating the vision, um, and exercising empathy. So, you do want to have both. It's just a challenge though sharing that with the rest of the world when the rest of the world continues to box us into these groups and then creates this hierarchy.

MIKE
That is a really good stopping point for this episode. Shinta and Nancy, thanks for taking time out to talk this week about the manager versus leader. Next week, we're going to get into how you see yourselves and where do you fall, and do you go in and out of those roles? So, I appreciate your taking time out this week. Thank you.

NANCY
Thank you.

SHINTA
Thank you.

MIKE
If you know someone who you think would be a great fit for this podcast, have them reach out to me at michael.mills@montgomerycollege.edu. Meanwhile, keep moving MC Forward.

[MUSIC]