

## Followers are Leaders Too

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“Raise your hand if you consider yourself a leader. Now raise your hand if you consider yourself a follower. Come on... you must choose between one or the other.”

This is a scenario that plays out in organizations everywhere. While it may not occur in exactly the way described, by being asked to raise your hand, it is certainly present in the way we view others... and often in how others view us. We find ourselves placing our colleagues in the two distinct silos of “leader” and “follower.” But, we know that the world and our organizations are not so easily defined.

Being a good follower is often the same as being a good leader. That’s right. Sometimes by assuming the best leadership role required for a given situation means that we take a step back and allow someone else to lead. We become a follower. But this in no way lets us off the leadership hook as we assume new roles and responsibilities. Let’s discuss a few of these:

- *Initiator*: suggests new ideas, raises questions, sets goals
- *Information and Opinion Seeker*: open to new ideas, asks and encourages others to share new ideas
- *Encourager*: encourages and stimulates others to participate, shares and supports their efforts
- *Facilitator*: helps the group improve communications by testing, clarifying, and understanding meanings, makes sure others are being understood
- *Evaluator*: questions the practicality or logic of ideas, but not too quickly or in a way that embarrasses or demeans others
- *Orienter*: summarizes, clarifies, and helps the group find a sense of direction
- *Consensus Seeker*: tests whether the group is in agreement and works on solutions to achieve consensus

By now you are probably thinking that I pulled a “bait and switch” on you as all of these roles and responsibilities are those of a leader. They are!... and that’s the point. It is important to understand these roles from both the perspective of a leader as well as the follower. When we follow, and when others assume this role, it is important to understand how we fit within the team. In other words, how followers can convey leadership, too.

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