Ten Hats All Leaders Wear

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As a leader, all day long you are wearing a hat. Not the kind that people might laugh at or that might smoosh your hair, but a hat nonetheless.

For the next few minutes I want you to think of the various roles you play as a leader and different hats that you wear. While there are likely more, let's talk about ten of them briefly.

Coach. As a leader you have a responsibility (and need) to develop others to succeed in their roles and prepare for future roles.

Facilitator. As a leader you have a role to facilitate (make things easier) for others. While we might think of this most often in a meeting or group situation, there are many times when you might wear the facilitator hat to help processes flow better for greater ease and productivity.

Strategist. While this hat might often be thought about leaders at higher levels in an organization, the truth is that all leaders must think strategically – thinking about the big picture and what directions and approaches must be used to reach the desired results.

Visionary. Related to strategy, leaders must have a picture of where they are heading and why that destination matters to the organization, their team and themselves.

Change Agent. With strategy and vision comes the ever-present need for change. As a leader we must lead and champion the changes that we envision and those that have been entrusted to us from above.

Decision-Maker. We want others to engage. We want their input, and as a leader we must be willing to make a decision. Whether it is a decision with less-than-perfect information, a decision that might be unpopular, or even one we don't like ourselves, as leaders making decisions comes with the territory.

Influencer. Call it mediation or negation or even arbitration – the hat is really about influence. As a leader we must constantly be influencing others.

Team Member/Colleague. As leaders we aren't always leading. We are also a member of our teams, as well as being the members of other project and peer teams. We must know when to put this hat on – and when to take it off.

Delegator. We can't do it all. The best leaders put on their delegator hat willingly and strategically to coach and mentor, and to forward the work of the team.

Listener. This hat better be a tight fitting one, because it really needs to be on underneath all of the other hats all the time. As leaders we often think we need to be doing the talking – yet the best leaders talk less, and ask, listen, and observe more. (Click to tweet this.)

This list may seem a bit daunting, but when you realize that you are likely wearing many of them on the same day, and people will want you to switch hats instantly, it becomes downright scary.

The purpose of identifying the hats, is to understand the roles well enough that when you are in a given role and wearing a given hat, you can be more effective because you are more aware of what is needed at that moment.

Now it is your turn. Think about these questions to apply these ideas to your work as a leader. (And please leave your answers in the comments below!)

- Which hats am I most confident wearing?
- Which hats do I need to wear more often or more comfortably?
- What steps will I take given this information?