In this last of three articles, let’s look at what leaders really do and then take a look at how leaders and managers differ. Bear in mind that not every one can be the leader but everyone can be a leader.

Leaders ask, “What has to be done?” They do not wait to be told or shown. They are focused on the future and on achieving goals and objectives. They do not wait around for things to happen.

Leaders ask, “How do I make a real contribution?” In every organization there are real issues which must be addressed. Leaders seek them out and deal with them.

Leaders ask, “What are the goals and objectives?” Goals and objectives must be clear, specific and measurable. Leaders push for their development and insure that they are understood throughout the organization.

Leaders ask, “How do we achieve the goals and objectives?” Knowledge does not equal action. Leaders know what must be done and create action plans to do those things which are critical to success.

Leaders Respect Those Who Have Strengths They Lack. No one can be an expert in all aspects of an organization or operation. Seeking out others whose experience is greater than one’s own is a sign of personal, emotional and professional security and wisdom.

Leaders Are Visionaries. Too often the focus is on today and quick fixes. Leaders see far into the future and seek to make all decisions in light of the vision, mission and the future consequences.

Leaders Do Not Go with the Flow. It can be dangerous to accept the prevailing opinion as truth. It is equally dangerous to listen only to those who agree with you. Leaders respect others’ opinions and recognize that their perspective and “world view” may be different.

Ask yourself where you fit and where you want to be. Seek out good leaders and look for one who is willing to mentor you. Failing that, learn, adopt and adapt the attributes and performance characteristics of those whose leadership you value, respect and respond to.

About the Author
L. Douglas Mault is president of the Executive Advisory Institute, Yakima, Wash.