

The performance PIVOT

Have you taken the leap from manager to leader – or do you aspire to? If so, you should be switching from high achiever to high performer. CLAUDIA LANTOS explains.

If you've ever felt overwhelmed or overstretched at work, here's a way to see it in a new light: there's a difference between acting as a high achiever compared to a high performer. One will exhaust you and the other will fill you with energy. I've coached many amazing women as they move from management to leadership. This move demands a move from high achiever to high performer – a difference that can be lost on new (and experienced) leaders. Now more than ever we are facing constant change, complexity and adversity as part of our leadership roles. To make your life easier, self-awareness, self-management and self-care are key. It sounds so simple, yet we all know that

self-management goes out of the window quickly when we're under pressure, dealing with the stress of a high workload and urgent deadlines that need to be met.

WHERE CAN IT GO WRONG?

As a manager, you became effective at 'managing' your team to deliver agreed outcomes for yourself and your team. You became a subject-matter expert, providing the knowledge to help your team complete their tasks. You and your team all acted as high achievers, laser focused to achieve the task at hand. You delivered your contribution to your personal high standards, often without too much concern about whether your team members could keep up with those standards. Because you, as the manager, will make sure those tasks are done anyway, whether they deliver or not. In your new leadership role, that strategy will not work. As a leader, you must role-model the right behaviours to your team. You are a part of, and contributing to, the wider system dynamics in the organisation. You do not have all the answers anymore. Nor do you have the time to complete tasks

that fall short of your standards. Now you need to empower and rely on your team. As you delegate to them, you must facilitate their learning by allowing them to make mistakes. This helps them to grow into their new roles too, and step up to the next level. Your focus shifts to setting the strategy and vision of your team, working with your functional peers towards the broader company objectives.

So what goes wrong? As the pressure ramps up, leaders tell me that they default to the comfort of their 'manager' role, using the high-achiever strategies to make things happen. They fall into the old habit of doing everything themselves. They over-stretch themselves. Pretty soon, they report feeling exhausted, overwhelmed and asking themselves, 'Can I do this job?' This is the start of the corrosive feeling of imposter syndrome, which makes us feel that we have a job we are not qualified for.

WHAT CAN YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

I use the diagram on the opposite page to outline the crucial difference between managing and leading a team – between acting like a high achiever and a high performer. It shows the difference between focusing on the WHAT and the HOW, and between DOING and BEING. As a leader, you need a new default to high performer by focusing on the HOW. You still set out to achieve a goal (the WHAT), but now you share your intention and your train of thought with your team. This means they understand what needs to be done and will come up with a way to make it happen. Yes, they might make mistakes and not deliver to your high standards, but your new role is to manage that risk with clear priorities and a laser focus on driving the business instead of executing tasks.

To deal with this high pressure and workload, you must take some steps that seem counter-intuitive:

1 TAKE A STEP BACK: ANTICIPATE AND REFLECT. DECIDE WHAT APPROACH IS BEST Of course, at first, this feels like you're wasting precious time. But you are investing time (and less than you might think) so that you and your team can

easily deal with this type of complexity in future. You will future-proof yourself and your team.

2 ASK FOR HELP! YOU DON'T HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS ANYMORE

That's why you have a team and peers. Make sure to invest time and energy to build your functional relationships, source relevant information and find synergy. Broaden your world and your contribution and include your peers as allies in achieving your goals. In return, help them achieve theirs. One and one is three.

3 STAY IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Reacting and putting out fires is like backseat driving (not much help). Use your strengths to take the wheel and stay in the driver's seat. Anticipate and prepare thoroughly for important conversations and meetings.

Develop a toolbox that increases your adaptability, decision making and resilience. There's nothing wrong with acting like a high achiever, as long as it serves you. But as you progress from manager to leader, you will benefit more when your team members are the high achievers, focusing on the tasks, and you are a high performer, focusing on driving the business. That way, they achieve their goals and contribute to the team deliverables, while you focus on the bigger picture, fine-tuning the strategy as you go. Focus more on managing risks as you delegate, by honing your delegation skills, and facilitating your high-performing team members to grow

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to the next level. We're only human. Don't be so hard on yourself if you have become overwhelmed (also a typical high-achiever trait). Now you know the difference between high achievers and high performers, take a step back and:

- *Become self-aware: am I acting as a high achiever or as a high performer?*
- *Self-manage: knowing how to effectively shift your focus to high performer*
- *Take care of yourself: knowing when to take a step back and recharge/reset, so that you can keep up leading by example in a more effortless way.*

Ready to take the leap into leadership? Contact Claudia Lantos at claudia@lantoscoaching.com for a one-on-one discovery session. She'll help you become a high performer without the stress and overwhelm. +

Claudia Lantos is the author of *The Adversity Advantage* and executive coach and director of Lantos Coaching & Consultancy. As an executive coach, she helps leaders shift from high-achiever to high-performer mode when facing adversity by taking their awareness of their strengths and behaviours and providing them with tools to manage their peak performance, building resilience. Get your signed copy of *The Adversity Advantage* at lantoscoaching.com/book.

SHIFTING FROM HIGH ACHIEVER TO HIGH PERFORMER

FULL FLOW POWERED BY EFFECTIVE TRANSITIONING AND MANAGEMENT OF PEAK PERFORMANCE

- INCREASING LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS
- PERFORMING IN FLOW
- LEAST EFFORT, MAXIMUM OUTCOMES

