You have a lot of responsibilities as the leader of a support group for people with amputations. These responsibilities including leading the human (people) side of this group as well as managing the group’s time, money and other resources. You can help the support group achieve its mission and meet its goals when you do both of these jobs well.

To be an effective support group leader, you need leadership and management skills. While these skills overlap, they are not the same. Here are some ways these skills are alike and how they differ.

**Leadership Qualities and Tasks**

Leadership refers to ways you can influence group members and help them achieve group goals. Here are some qualities of good leaders (from Larson):

**Passion.** Leaders have passion for causes larger than they are. They also have dreams about how to make the world a better place. Effective leaders rally others to make these dreams come true.
Vision. Leaders have the vision to answer “What can be?” rather than “What is?” This vision gives direction to, and breathes life into, a passionate dream.

Confidence and humility. Leaders have confidence in their vision, yet humility enough to learn from others.

Values. Leaders share values of the group and its members. For support group leaders, values can include respect and caring for people who need encouragement.

Creativity. Leaders think “outside the box” and are not afraid to try new and different ideas.

Intellect and knowledge. Leaders are perpetual students – always learning from others about ways to improve.

Communication skills. Leaders speak and write in ways that encourage others to follow.
Interpersonal skills. Leaders listen well, assign jobs, solve conflicts, and keep groups moving ahead in positive directions. Leaders focus on the “people” side of groups. Tasks often include training and supervising others (paid staff and volunteers), delegating responsibility, and building a sense of teamwork. Leaders are also the ones to thank and reward others for jobs well done. In truth, support group leaders often have little power or authority to make people act in certain ways. Instead, leaders can lead well through influence and example.

Management Qualities and Tasks

Management deals with the administrative part of support groups. This includes paperwork tasks as well as dealing with budget, space and other resources. Good managers bring these qualities:

Organizational vision. Managers look for ways that groups can be both efficient and effective. This includes paying attention to how well a group is working and making needed changes when there are problems.
**Problem-solving skills.** Managers analyze problems and decide how to solve them.

**Energy and determination.** Managers need to be both tolerant and tough when there is conflict or other types of “people problems.”

**Communication skills.** Managers should be able to clearly express a group’s purpose and goals. Managers should also be good listeners when people share new ideas or disagree.

In support groups, management tasks include:

**Strategic planning.** This means looking at the “big picture” of where the group is going. Planning includes writing a mission statement, setting long-term goals and short-term objectives, and making an action plan along with a budget. The purpose of planning is to prevent problems and surprises.

Here is an example of planning in a support group. If a group decides it wants a newsletter, planning tasks include: setting objectives (what you hope this newsletter will do), making a mailing list, and creating a budget (costs and funding). Planning also
includes deciding who will write, edit, publish, and distribute the newsletter.

**Organizing.** This means matching people with tasks. An example in support groups is forming a board of directors. Organizing includes deciding how many board members to have and whether nonamputees can be on the board of directors.

**Controlling.** This means making sure that everything is under control and working the way it should. For support groups, this includes budget tasks – setting up ways for members to pay dues and making sure the money is well spent.

**Leadership and Management**

Support group leaders need good management and strong leadership skills. Here are two examples why this is important:

**Leadership skills** supply the passion and vision needed to define a group’s mission.

Management skills create a way to accomplish this mission.
Management skills help groups develop goals and action plans. Leadership skills communicate, persuade, encourage, and motivate others to follow these plans and achieve group goals.

Leadership and management are distinctive yet complementary skills. I know from experience that both these skills are very important when leading support groups.

Ways to Learn More:

- MAP for Nonprofits
  http://www.mapfornonprofits.org/

- Sandra Larson Consulting
  http://www.sandra-larson-consulting.com/resources/

- Kotter, John P
  What Leaders Really Do