



Generational Leadership: Becoming Leaders Worth Following

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Speaker: W. Stanton Smith, Principal, Deloitte LLP

Thank you. I am honored to be here at the Naval Academy . . . and wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Partners/Principals/Directors and all the employees of Deloitte¹, to thank you profoundly for what you currently do and what you will do for our country.

It is doubly an honor to be asked to be presenting at this timely and on-point conference on “Generational Leadership”. Our theme reflects the fact that a sea change has occurred in the attitudes and expectations of the workforce and that presently we are seeing only the tip of this iceberg.

Top-down management structures are viewed as losing effectiveness in a turbulent world. Transparency is the key concept and networked organizations have come into favor because of their flexibility and agility. Practically speaking, the intersection of baby boomer retirements, a relatively small gen x group and a large number of gen Y’ers, or millennials, entering the workforce is leading to millennials assuming responsibility quickly. Often they are called upon to lead multi-generational teams.

Younger leading older is not new. What is new are the apparent differences among the generations in their perceptions of how to get things done, what constitutes a quality product, what processes are really needed to get a quality job done , what constitutes acceptable

leadership in the context of effective teamwork and what characterizes a leader who is worth following.

How real are the differences? You may ask “Why should I care? And if we should care, what do we do to resolve the differences in a positive manner?” These are just a few of the questions leaders must deal with effectively if we are to have a productive workforce and workplace.

With all this in mind, my objective is to set a tone of open minded inquiry and constructive discussion where we listen carefully and thoughtfully to each other and learn from one another...where we are all colleagues sharing insights regardless of rank or longevity...If we meet this objective we have only one ingredient to add to the mix that creates leaders who are worth following. That ingredient is real knowledge of the relevant facts regarding how generations differ and where they are similar if not the same.

So I’ll start with some generational definitions. To further build your fact base I’ll describe four things that won’t change for anybody regardless of the economy, some factors that research shows all generations have in common when it comes to what constitutes a fulfilling life and career and finally what recent research says about what kind of leaders’ millennials may prove to be.

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So let's define the generations and have some fun with it. First, here's a boomers perspective:

- Veterans or Traditionalists (born prior to 1946)
 - Work, work, work more if you ask me (and even if you don't)
- Baby Boomers (born from 1946 to 1964)
 - Work, work, work...it's what we are all about
- Gen x (born from 1965 to 1980)
 - Work, work some more with flexibility, work even more? Let's talk...
- Millennials (born after 1980)
 - Work flexibly anywhere, anytime, on my terms...Work even more?...How lame is that! I've just texted all my friends to tell them how lame you are!!

And now the generational differentiators from a Gen Y, or Millennial's, viewpoint:

- Veterans or Traditionalists (born prior to 1946)
 - My grandparents...who knows what they were thinking but I guess they were hard workers...always nice to me
- Baby Boomers (born from 1946 to 1964):
 - Work, work, work...that's fine and you've achieved a lot but...ever consider all the glass broken on the way to "success"?...this can't be the only way
- Gen x (born from 1965 to 1980)
 - Work, work some more with flexibility, work even more? Let's talk...they think Millennials get all the attention...they ask, "What about me"?

- Millennials (born after 1980)
 - Work flexibly anywhere, anytime, on my terms...Work even more?...Don't you ever want to go home? How about some balance here? I'm willing to work hard but not harder or without regard to the impact on the rest of my life. Let's think of some alternatives to how we work now.

So what do these definitions have in common . . . a lack of true understanding of each other as evidenced by the use of clichés. Let's get beyond the clichés and I'll do this by providing you a window on my world.

It starts like this . . . I'm talking to some of my boomer colleagues in the course of several phone calls . . . here's a synopsis of comments relative to addressing generational issues: "We're in the midst of an epic economic crisis. Why are we still talking about generational anything? Who cares what these millennials want . . . or gen x'ers or boomers for that matter? You mean the Navy is sponsoring an entire conference on the topic of generational leadership . . . in a time of crisis? Let's get our priorities straight . . . everybody just has to hunker down and get back to work."

Yes we all have to focus on working our way out of this crisis. However, the crisis doesn't change any of the facts . We'll talk about the four things that haven't changed . . . the trends that are long term that are shaping the millennials' expectations of employers and careers as well as how they prefer to work . . . and I'll add that boomers and gen x'ers are starting to look a lot like millennials nowadays . . . more on this later.

Four things that won't change

1. The non-traditional family unit makes up the vast majority of households.

To paraphrase the U.S. Census Bureau, there two key attributes of a traditional household: two people are married and one spouse works outside the home and the other does not. In 1950 the US Census identified nearly 60% of families as traditional . . . now it is only 17%. What does this mean? There is a need for flexibility in navigating work-life issues that wasn't there when many of today's business leaders were growing up. In addition the

workplace was designed with the traditional structure in mind . . . linear career paths . . . expectation of total dedication to work if you expected to make any progress in your career . . . employees were expected to fit their lives into work rather than the other way around.

2. Flexibility and career customization are necessities for workers.

This need for flexibility is enhanced by the fact that our research shows that both genders expect women to continue to have primary responsibility for childcare and eldercare. So, since about 60% of college grads in the U.S. are female, there will be continuing pressure for customization of careers and general flexibility.

3. Workers (especially millennials) are re-defining the place of work in their lives.

Additionally, research shows a low percentage of millennials and gen x'ers who are interested in a prime focus on work. And finally, men report spending almost 50% more time daily with their children than did their equivalents in the late 1970's. In addition I've heard more than one senior executive say "I missed my child's games; I will not miss my grandchild's." In summary, changes in the family structure which affect focus on work and demand for increased flexibility in work schedules, work setting, job design and career planning are impacting everyone.

With the first three unchanging things as background it is quite logical to imagine that we are moving towards a corporate lattice where role, schedule, workload, and pace can be varied depending on the ebb and flow of life. Our research shows that this career customization approach is just what millennials are looking for . . . but most importantly it meets the needs of all generations.

4. A set of three realities - technology, attitudes toward business, and a consumer mindset, have fundamentally affected how millennials view the world.

Growing up as "technology natives" has profoundly affected what young people expect from life and how they relate to it. The intensity and extent of exposure to technology has had a major impact on how people perceive work as well as when, where, and how it can be done. It permits a 24/7 connection to others, but especially to work. As such, this 24/7 connectivity removes the traditional constraints

of office hours and location. Technology encourages networks and a lack of boundaries that makes operating in hierarchies problematic and challenges traditional ways of doing and managing work. At first, this difference appears to be generational, but it is not. It is the difference between those who view technology as a tool or a toy and those who see it as the way they interact with the world — an extension of them or, as it has been said, their oxygen.

The next important factor is the view that millennials (as well as their parents and teachers) have about business values. They believe that despite what corporations say, businesses value financial success far more than they value the people that work for them or the communities in which they live. This view appears to be based on the negative impacts of mergers, acquisitions, and other business trends. This skepticism about business can be summarized by this comment made by a college student who was strongly supported by others in her focus group and in subsequent ones: "We are looking to be loyal to an employer if that employer will be loyal to us, but we don't think business operates that way today."

Growing up in the world of lay-offs , corporate scandals and now a huge economic crisis has resulted in young people believing that:

- Businesses generally, and big businesses in particular, value their own financial gain far above all else;
- Business talk about the importance of people is largely insincere

These skeptical views are in the range of two-thirds or higher with generally under one in five having a positive view of business. And the skepticism isn't restricted to business; it reaches to all large organizations including government.

One reaction to hearing these data is: "who cares . . . business is business and they have to work and how they feel won't matter". This view forgets that uncommitted, disaffected employees are far less productive than ones who feel committed to an employer's strategy. Also the young people we've interviewed have expressed a decided preference to work in smaller organizations because they believe that they'll have more control and better growth

opportunities. This means that the recruiting and retention challenges of larger organizations just became more difficult.

Here is where organizations with real savvy about what people want will have a decided advantage. They will be able to transcend the stereotypes about large organizations. But this requires real leadership from the top of the house.

Before I talk about the final divide, I'd like to focus on the serious implications of having two-thirds of our young people highly skeptical of business leaders' intentions and their decided preference for smaller organizations . . . and what can be done about it. We at Deloitte have come to realize that this rebuilding of trust or at least reducing the level of skepticism will require leadership on our part. We are endeavoring to do this through community outreach especially in schools. One innovative program is Life, Inc. Our goal is to help young people, in middle and high school as well community colleges to answer one of life's biggest and toughest questions with an approach that builds confidence. That question is: "what am I going to do when I grow up?" Utilizing the book, Life, inc. by Neale Godfrey the ultimate career guide for young people, gives tips and tools to help young people formulate visions about the future possibilities in an interactive way. There is an accompanying web site plus a student journal and teacher's guide. All material including the book, journal and guide are providing free of charge and in electronic format. Response to date during the first year of roll out has been robust. In fact the U.S. Army has adopted Life, Inc. for use in career education for its on base schooling.

By now some of you may be saying, "Hey what's this got to do with the topic of leadership?" well everything. Our research shows that young people are looking for reasons to be optimistic about business . . . they know they'll have to work for larger organizations and have told us that they will look favorably on the organizations that help them deal with this career decision process which makes them apprehensive about their futures. Giving young people these tools leads to a more positive view of business regardless of size. Leaders worth following understand the need to invest in the future just as others invested for us. Leaders worth following also recognize that long lasting

success comes from people who believe they made the right choice to work for them and who glad to make the organization successful.

Now for the third potent divide: consumer attitude. Millennials, as we've noted, have been raised to be consumers . . . to question value . . . to demand and expect high-quality, easy-to-handle "microwavable experiences." This is the world in which they were raised; thus it's understandable that they carry these expectations with them as they consume everything — including careers.

The effect of this consumer attitude is profound on us as leaders. How do leaders deal with all the questions ranging from what's the value of the work you assign to questions about your qualifications to lead. Two stories are apropos here.

First the case of the manager besieged by subordinate questions.

An owner of a boutique software company was approached by his managers. Their complaint: "we can't get anything done on time because our junior staff keeps interrupting us to ask questions. The owner listened sympathetically and said, "Ladies and gentlemen you are well paid to be interrupted. I don't want to hear about how our younger people are not developing because you're not available to coach them." His point: Leaders worth following must be approachable and available because how else can they lead if they are not in touch and not transferring knowledge. Our research shows that the more you prepare an employee to leave the more likely are to stay as they recognize that you as a leader are giving them what they want in terms of career development.

Next, the case of the senior professor challenged to justify her value.

A very senior accounting professor started her honors accounting seminar with what she thought was a simple request: please tell us your name, hometown and what you hope to accomplish by taking this honors course. All went smoothly until the last student finished introducing herself. The silence was deafening as all the honor students looked expectantly at her. Finally she said, "Are you waiting for me to say something?" One of the students said, "We'd now like you to tell us how you are qualified to teach us." She didn't disclose her answer but she wasn't happy with it and asked

me for advice. How do you respond when challenged to justify your value? My suggestion is to turn the question around by saying, “that’s a good question that we should all ask ourselves when we’ve done anything for a long time. My answer is that I know my material and enjoy teaching it. But most of all I have over 25 years in getting talented people like you started on promising careers”. The point is to put aside old views of hierarchy and accept the expectation of transparency and the consumer mindset . . . both are here to stay.

The implication of what I’ve just related is that we must be mindful of the following as we work with millennials even if you are a leader working with your own generation.

- Readiness to work gap; there is always a gap to be spanned between school and work. The gap is greater than ever and employers who are savvy will work with the millennials desire “to get it right” to teach them how to be professionals.
- Insecurities about personal finances and holding onto a job or getting one in the first place; millennials are feeling significant pressure from having to repay student loans while contending with an economic crisis and its affect on employment prospects. As leaders we need to keep in mind that these are the first hard times that any of them have probably experienced. We as leaders must show the way through transparency and willingness to hear them out as they try to grapple with business ambiguity.

Regardless of the state of the economy, millennials are “engaged” consumers. They expect to:

- Have real input into the product or service
- Influence the product or service in a noticeable way
- Receive value for time, effort and energy, i.e., do not want to be taken advantage of

Interestingly these expectations are beginning to be observed in all generations . . . the millennials are just the most vocal.

In his book “The Trophy Kids Grow UpHow Millennials are Shaking up the Workplace,” Ron Alsop makes a strong case as to why millennials may have trouble with business ambiguity and why they ask so many questions. Once again we must help millennials become professionals by setting out clear project deliverables complete with due dates and resources available to help them complete project tasks and then coaching them on how to ask the right questions at the right time.

Alsop calls the millennials the “Checklist Kids” and observes that they:

- Want to be right and want the road map to get to “right”
- Are very diligent once they receive clear directions
- Are accustomed, based on how we’ve prepared them for standardized tests, to receiving explicit directions. The “Checklist Kids” are:
 - Taught rigidly with detailed test guides and formulaic writing exercises so they would score well on standardized tests.
- Are, as a result of the three factors above, challenged by ambiguity and how to figure out on their own how things fit together.

All the above further underscores the need for those of us with life experience to really coach and mentor millennials to help them contend with a world that operates very differently from the educational environment with which they are so familiar. Fortunately millennials want to be coached and mentored by experts.

Now I promised some more common ground for all generations and here it is. Findings of a study entitled “The New Career Paradigm” support the convergence, at least at a high level, of what all generations are seeking.

First there are four life fulfillment factors that are common. The priorities may differ by generation but the factors do not.

- Quality of family life
- Financial security
- Physical/mental/spiritual health
- Satisfying work

What about the factors leading job satisfaction? Here they are. Once again only priorities differ.

- Salary/ Benefits
- Job security
- Work-life balance/ Flexible work options
- Meaningful work/Advancement opportunities

And finally, are all generations likely to stay at a job for similar reasons? The answer is “yes”, with priorities differing as mentioned.

- Autonomy and control over work and life
- Compensation and benefits
- Internal entrepreneurial opportunity
- Positive work environment

But what does all of this say about leadership style and substance? After all, this conference is about leadership today and in the future. Are we talking about distinctions that are not real differences? Is there really anything new to be brought to our discussion about leadership by millennials?

We asked the same question at Deloitte. With the help of the Institute for the Future, a Palo Alto, California based consulting firm we interviewed, within the past 15 months, a number of 20-somethings who run their own businesses or not-for-profits as well as those working in large corporations or professional service firms. Would they be any different than those who came before them? Here's what we learned.

First we assessed the external forces affecting new leaders. We identified six forces that affect all leaders but especially millennials:

- **Migrating Jobs**; outsourcing, globalization, and a new competitive landscape for American workers: Millennials are finding their first jobs in a period where middle-management jobs are disappearing and white-collar jobs are following blue-collar jobs to cheaper labor markets.
- **Less forgiving pace of work**; the increased pace of work leads to an expectation to respond in almost real-time to an increasing volume of messages and client or customer requests. This puts a real strain on workers at all levels. Compared to the environment in which today's leaders learned how to manage time and take care of clients, today's workplace is much less forgiving.
- **Do it yourself (DIY)**; with the rise of social entrepreneurship business doesn't have to be as usual. The dotcom experience reshaped the landscape for entrepreneurship among young people. Young people see DIY, or do it yourself and entrepreneurship as a reasonable option for themselves.
- **Social utilities** such as social software, virtual environments, new chat tools, new connectivity tools shows the rapid emergence of new platforms that create a huge impact on daily life. Examples such as YouTube only 3-4 years ago and Twitter only 2-3 years ago, not to mention blogs just about 5 years ago, has brought about new possibilities for better communication, more efficient work processes, and new arenas for brand management.
- **Transparency**; our research shows that transparency by leaders is the most highly valued quality a leader can possess. Transparency has a specific meaning to millennials. This quality has four aspects which define it: being honest with everyone; respecting the opinions of others; respecting the time

of others by being punctual to meetings; and being an effective speaker. More people are using the weapons of transparency to effect change.

- **New meanings of adulthood;** for many professional youth, there is a longer period after before they get married and have children. There is a lot more energy being channeled into productive activities that are not family focused.

We identified eight characteristics that point toward how millennials intend to lead.

1. Leadership by Active Attention

Young leaders flourish in an environment of active attention to their work, both its strengths and weaknesses. Survey respondents didn't express regret at not getting enough attention, but said that attention is highly valued AND highly valuable—it is a motivator for better performance and a tangible sign that they are being valued. They expect their leaders to proactively reach out.

It's not surprising, given the faster pace of work and the growing number of communications channels and methods in the workplace, that young people have made attention as one of their metrics for leadership. Millennials have grown up in the middle of what has been called as the "attention economy": a context in which the scarcest resource isn't ideas or talent, but attention itself.

Millennial leaders themselves are keenly aware of the challenge of prioritizing what they pay attention to and how they spend their time. They are also accustomed to on-going communications with their peers and parents, via cell phones, text messaging, instant messaging, or social networking sites like Facebook. They have their own strategies for managing the attention economy, and they can be sympathetic to the real limitations that their boomer and gen X leaders have—especially when those limitations are clearly communicated. But they are also highly attuned to what it means to not get attention. To them, high-quality active attention from leadership, even if it's just a weekly email to the group, is a signal that they are valued.

High-achieving young people also enter the workforce having had a lot of attention from their

parents. Millennials generally don't feel entitled for more attention from leadership: this is just what they know. Organizations can help young people by communicating more clearly with them about the reality of what kind of attention they should expect, and why.

2. Transparency: Count Me In

Young leaders expect an open work environment in which more processes are transparent, especially at the top. Some younger workers actively dislike the paradigm of "closed and proprietary." It doesn't mean they feel they have the right to be involved in decision-making, rather, they are accustomed to having the Internet at their fingertips; information helps them figure out how to create more value for them and for the organization. *A lack of information feels like a barrier to more intense participation. This can often be a sore point in organizations where traditional business models run on hierarchies of privileged information.* This may be a struggle for security organizations; leaders must strive to maintain that delicate balance..

Transparency is important for millennials in a number of arenas: understanding what leaders are up to, having a clear picture of the organization's incentives and risks, understanding internal challenges, and knowing what the future could look like for them if they stay with the firms. Young leaders have highly sensitive antennae for claims about transparency that are not held up in real life. Organizations would better support the growth of young leaders by being transparent about what they have decided **not** to be transparent about, than to pretend to be open when they're not.

Transparency is also a silent invitation for contribution and insights from younger leaders, even if these contributions might be rare. If organizations really want to nurture a new generation of leadership, being more transparent about the inner workings of the company is a good way to create employee engagement. Young leaders expressed openness to sharing their thoughts and energy with higher-ups. This is an area where businesses could be tapping into Gen Y passions much more effectively, as long as they also provide proper contexts for how and when to provide insight.

Here is an illustrative comment:

“ . . . telling the organization that everyone needs to work hard to drive creative synergies and increase shareholder value does absolutely nothing . . . It's some buzzwords . . . And it's a 17-link chain between anything I do and actual shareholder value . . . I think that sort of has to be absolutely clearly defined in order for it to motivate people to work, right? In order to—for anyone to understand what you're doing and where you're going.

— 25, male, marketing for a multinational company

3. Searching for an Impact: Making Everyone's Work More Relevant

Millennials are searching for ways to make an impact in their lives and at work. To do this, they want to work on the most important issues, for the most important clients, and with the most important people. One of the most powerful things a leader can do to support young leadership is to provide a broad context for work tasks and processes, in order to clarify the impact of those tasks on the organization as a whole. Knowing that what they are doing matters is perhaps the biggest motivator of all for millennials.

Young people are willing to put in their time and pay their dues, but they are not willing to work on tasks that seem meaningless. Traditional workflows tend to push “low value” work down to the entry-level and preserve “high value” work to top performers. Often, high value work is more satisfying and enjoyable, while low value work is rote and even boring. However, millennials bring to the workplace a strong desire to do things that have a tangible effect on the world, as well as a more networked sense of organizational membership that seeks to empower all individuals rather than just a few.

Making all work relevant is one part of the solution, and requires a new way of describing and communicating value. Simply telling Gen Y that they're valued, but not treating the work they do as meaningful, won't be enough. Young leaders also want a bit more space for creativity and innovation, in order to amplify their impact. If they're given small opportunities to pursue their own interests, they become much more engaged and the grunt work may be less

draining or demoralizing. Also, they may invest real energy examining the low value work processes, and might suggest genuine process improvements that save the company time and money.

Some sample comments are:

“[We] are looking for a sense of the bigger picture for sure, like being clued in to what is this organization about, where is it going, and why are we doing what we do . . . being able to talk about that to family and friends, and even be able to, you know, to blog . . . if you're invested in a job where you work, to have some public pride about it, and in your social network be able to represent and talk about what you're doing and what your part of it is, I think, is really important.”

— 30, female, commercial designer and researcher

“Everyone in our generation doesn't mind doing hard work as long as they see the potential and see the importance of the dirty work. They're fine doing it, but they want to know why. For example, why do they have to do this Excel spreadsheet? And if their boss, mentor, whoever it is, can give them ample reasons . . . instead of just saying, “Go do the work,” I think people in our generation are much more apt to go do the work and be confident that they're in a good position.”

— 24, male, professional services firm

4. The DIY Approach: Making Work continuously Relevant for Myself

As Deloitte and IFTF research has shown, young people are thinking of their careers and life paths at younger ages, and much earlier than previous generations. By the time they arrive at the workplace, some of them have been actively designing their lives for a decade. For some, this means that they have their own personal vision of what they want to learn, and they will create their own opportunities to do so, whether asked to or not. Their job is part of their overall journey in life. They exercise a kind of personal leadership by actively making things happen for themselves, and they are often remarkably goal-oriented and armed with long

term plans. Hopefully, their choices also work for the organization.

One area in which we saw millennial leaders raising the bar for entire organizations was, not surprisingly, in new media. Not all millennials are tech savvy, but some are ready to start blogs, videos, podcasts, and social networking sites that relate to their professional identities or further the organization's goals. This can be a benefit for the organization, but also raises questions about information security, digital reputation and brand management, and person/professional etiquette.

Millennials need guidance on how to forge new paths with these new tools, and have potential to be great partners with the proper oversight.

Potential conflicts between DIY motivations and organizational goals can be kept to a minimum if leaders have a better sense of what kind of personal journey a millennial leader is on, and where work at the current organization fits into it. Leaders should also understand that many millennial leaders are constantly reevaluating where they are on their personal path, and should be engaged often in this conversation. As leaders, millennials are likely to be more open to the people they work with taking the same kind of approach.

Some sample comments are:

"In my mind, there's a track that I really want to follow, you know. . . it's that classic question: where do you see yourself in ten years? If I don't feel like I'm working towards that goal while I'm here at work, I need to work towards that on my own . . . As long as a job is continuing to challenge me I'm probably not going to go anywhere."

— 24, male, IT and design, small company

5. Passion and High Expectations: More Than Just a Job

There is a growing social pressure for young people to develop passionate relationships with their work experience, especially if they are leaders. Many millennial leaders place high demands on their workplaces and on themselves. They look at work as an arena for finding and honing their passions. The passion can be for an industry, a company, a community, a skill, or even an experience. Money and status

are definitely priorities for some, but all of our respondents talked about how important it was that they be doing something they loved. Millennials make passion an integral component of their leadership, and they expect their organizations to support them in doing so.

Young leaders are staying in organizations that recognize the importance of their passions, leaving those that don't and creating their own organizations to get it just right. Some are deeply engaged with several organizations in order to satisfy different kinds of passions. These millennials work full time and also lead their own organizations on the side, working nights and weekends. Sometimes they love their full-time jobs but have extra energy left over for social or community issues; sometimes they are building an exit strategy toward work that feels more fulfilling.

Passions, unlike ordinary skills, often take millennials out beyond the boundaries of the organization they work for. A commitment to growing their abilities in a specific domain, such as design, marketing, writing, or global work experience, motivates young leaders to engage with larger communities, online networks, and professional associations beyond any single organization. Professionals have always participated in associations outside of work, but millennials are amplifying those tendencies with online platforms and the enthusiasm of a true believer. Many want to extend their passions beyond the organization and could be creating real value for the firm if allowed to do so.

Some sample comments are:

"My generation isn't interested in having a job. My generation is interested in pursuing –terms like, 'pursuing a passion,' or 'exploring an interest,' or 'developing a skill.' They're not interested in having a job. My grandfather and my father were interested in having a job."

— 29, male, environmental non-profit leader

6. Networked Leadership: Sharing Both Risk and Glory

Some young people don't want to be "leaders" and view the label and aspiration with skepticism. A few respondents were uncomfortable taking on the mantle of leadership even as they led their own

organizations, some quite large. They described traditional leadership in terms of arrogance and hierarchy and did not want to be associated with the desire to be at the top of a pinnacle. Internal Deloitte data also suggests that younger workers are less interested in following the most rigorous traditional paths to leadership within the firms.

As we probed further, we discovered that millennials are interested in leadership—just not some of the leadership styles they have experienced thus far. They are more concerned with maintaining group harmony than either gen x or boomers seem to be, and are just now in the process of refining a kind of networked or shared leadership in which both risks and benefits are distributed across a wider team. This does not mean that they are not willing to take personal responsibility for decision making; on the contrary, Millennial leaders talked about the need to be accountable and decisive as part of their vision of good leadership.

But when it came to describing what they do as leaders amongst their peers, they often returned to ideas of team motivation, collegiality, transparency, and a deep dislike of pretension. This could be partly due to their life stage—most are unmarried without children—and therefore rely more heavily on their peers for social context. But even those millennials with spouses (none had children) were committed to a radical transparency and communication program within their organizations, implementing everything from “Truth Cards” that can be played at any time by any employee to make someone listen to what he or she has to say, to completely open discussions of financial incentives. Millennials enjoy working with teams because it helps them amplify the impact of their actions on the organization.

Some sample comments are:

“I think that especially our generation is much more in tune to the community, is much more in tune with our colleagues; they recognize the value of everyone having shared ownership in things.”

— 21, female, student government

“Leadership to me is not really [about] showing you are the leader. I’m more comfortable working as . . . like brothers

and sisters, like friends . . . It’s not like you make the decisions and they follow. But leadership is always viewed by them that you have something they will learn from . . . you work as a friend, you prove that you have something that they could learn from.”

— 30, female, China, Fortune 100 company

“ . . . the glory of leadership is no longer a perk. I think that, that sort of prestige, it’s nonsense. I don’t want to be director . . . because it’s like cool to be the director. I don’t even care that I’m in the credits . . . You don’t have to give me a fancy title. It’s the getting to do a thing that becomes the benefit . . . It’s going to take a lot more, I think, to engage [young leaders] commercially . . . it’s going to have to be about platform and resources that you can give them in return as opposed to some kind of formal position that’s fancy and whatever.”

— 30, female, commercial game designer and researcher

7. Guided Flexibility: A Signal of Mutual Respect

Most of the millennial leaders we interviewed did not respond strongly to the concept of “flexibility” when we asked them about it. Yet when they talked about the way they work and the things that have bothered them about leaders they worked with in the past, it became clear that the elements of traditional corporate flexibility—some ability to determine when and where one works—were seen as a signal of how much their leaders trusted and respected them. High-achieving millennials are hard workers who are willing to put in long hours if they know the meaning of what they’re doing, and they expect leaders to acknowledge their commitment by giving them a measure of authority about their work schedules.

Their views on flexibility are also based on pragmatism. They are aware that their most valuable contributions don’t always occur during conventional work hours, and they want to create the best final product possible.

Flexibility goes beyond an increased level of employee autonomy for millennials. Many are also looking for an organization that can be flexible about youth culture in the work place,

thus feeding millennials' networked sociability and making work a more enjoyable place to be. These young people have grown up working with multiple channels of information, including the Internet, music, and games. What looks like work to them is often seen as incorrect behavior in the corporate setting. Corporate culture is not a new concept, but it is often especially important for the youngest workers at an organization, who turn to the workplace as a primary source of social context and new opportunities.

At the same time, millennial leaders are looking for guidance and mentorship, and will be open to conversations that clarify the advantages and disadvantages of certain kinds of flexibility. For instance, working at home may mean not getting to know your colleagues as well, or not being there to take advantage of spontaneous opportunities. Organizations can signal their trust and concern for millennial leaders by being open to new ways of working while also giving them feedback on what their behaviors look like to others. Both sides can learn.

Some sample comments are:

“ . . . a guy and I stayed after work one time and we both brought in guitars, and we were playing Guitar Hero. We had it on the projector. And [senior leadership] came in, and they're like, what the hell are you guys doing in here? Like, oh, man, we're just—we're just playing—because all they saw was us playing with guitars, they didn't see the thing on the wall. They're like, you guys are crazy, and they left. And it was—and, I mean, that was—that was fun because it was a culture building kind of thing. I can guarantee you he was told not to bring it in again.”

— 25, male, marketing, Fortune 100 company

8. Work/Life Navigation: Taking Care of Me Is Good for the Organization

Since so many millennials have had two working parents, perhaps we should not have been surprised at their sophisticated views on the value of keeping themselves on a sane, healthy, happy track in life. Even as they told us stories of long work weeks doing things they loved, respondents have already discovered what today's leaders have had to find out the hard way: the critical link between personal and

organizational health. They expect that leaders will recognize this as well, and support them in doing what it takes to take care of themselves—even if it means not answering that email that comes two minutes after New Year's Eve. Millennial leaders could be a rich source of knowledge for corporations about more sane work/life navigation, but their values are also likely to spur serious pushback from older workers who have had to suffer years of overwork.

Part of what is driving millennial leaders' acute sense of the importance of taking time off is the incessant information environment in which we now exist. “Infomania” is a psychological term referring to the debilitating state caused by too much backed up information—a kind of modern-day series of endless dancing brooms carrying buckets of water, *a la* Disney's movie “*Fantasia*”. The cognitive damage and loss of efficiency in the workplace that result from Infomania are becoming more intense over time. Gen Y leaders are among those of the younger generation who have found healthy ways to manage information flows. They are often fiercely protective of their downtime.

Millennials will look to today's leaders as role models for self-care, and if they don't like what they see they may leave. Once again, organizations can harvest a lot of value by sponsoring honest conversations about the pace of a career, the value of downtime, and the logic behind certain sacrifices, across the generations. Many millennials enter the work force with a full set of volunteer activities, professional development programs outside of work, and a keen sense that now is the time of life when they should be having fun. They need help managing lives that are already overscheduled, and in figuring out what to let go of and why.

Some sample comments are:

“ . . . I think I see it more and more now. People cannot disconnect, and it gets so hard and so problematic that they literally almost have to take a week off just to start again, just to reset, and that's not a vacation either, right? That's like a mental-health week, you know? I'm anti-Blackberry . . . because I think it's a balance, particularly in the current media space between being available and being visible and being

engaged in the work of multi-media, and actually protecting your sort of fragile light or psyche.”

— 26, female, major media company

“[In the morning I] . . . then go do something where I can think, running or yoga, which, incidentally, I bill clients for, which I think is something that is very important for, like, hiring or working with creative people. A lot of people I know who work in this space, they can only think when they're walking around. But they have to be able to bill that because they're going to spend their brain cycles solving this design problem. They're not going to be in their office or sitting on a chair writing, brainstorming - no. “

— 30, female, successful consultant

Will millennials be able to achieve the leadership style we uncovered? Time will tell, but the key concept here is intention and that raises the odds of leadership styles moving in this direction.

In fact one successful entrepreneur said to us, “If my investors (who are all older boomers) learned how I'd really like to manage and lead, they wouldn't continue to give me the money I need.” A practical perspective but one that points to a friction point between generations and leadership styles to say the least.

Now it is time for reflection on our journey. We've explored the four things that won't change, what we have in common, what millennial leadership may look like . . . so where are we on our journey to become leaders worth following? We're at the point of needing to digest this material by talking about it.

So here's a parting thought and a challenge to you as participants in this important conference:

Accepting the validity of the four things that won't change or the need for new leadership styles does not mean lowering expectations as to the quality of work product that clients or customers receive. What it does mean is that we would do well to realize that millennials or gen x'ers cannot be younger versions of boomers nor do boomers have to become older versions of millennials or gen x'ers. We are all products of our upbringing. Therefore we will work most effectively together if we acknowledge our differences and similarities and partner together to make the present and the future a place where we all want to be.

Keep in mind the following as I issue you a challenge. It's a quote attributed to Mark Twain . . . *“It ain't what you don't know that gets you in trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so.”*

My challenge to you is to engage fully by actively listening while fearlessly keeping open minds and learning from each other. If you accept this challenge you will have acquired a key characteristic of a leader who is worth following . . . a leader who others can rely upon for wise, trustworthy and ethical leadership . . . the type of leader that we need now more than ever in our nation and our world.

Thanks for listening!

