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Differently

Leadership Skills for Millennials & Gen Z

Greg Buschman, Ph.D.(c)

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to those who will fill the leadership gap as Traditionalists and Baby Boomers retire. My greatest wish for the Millennial and Gen Z generations is that they learn how to lead our society and economy to new heights without all the hang-ups of past generational transitions.

I love working across generational and cultural lines, especially with Millennials and Gen Z. Maybe that's because my children are Millennials and Gen Z. I love them deeply. I don't want them to have to enter a workforce led by leaders who don't get the flow of our modern society.

I want to say thank you to my wife, Debra Buschman, and our children who have encouraged me and shared in the time and financial sacrifices required to complete a doctoral program and write this book.

Greg Buschman, Ph.D.(c)

Forward

 Ross Kirwin, MBA, VP & Investment Professional.

I was on the front end of the millennial generation entering the workforce, and many managers at that time didn't exactly know "what" we were all about. This book gives so much attention to learning about my generation. It's great to see how much research went into this book.

As opposed to being told, "get a job," the section that encourages folks to ask themselves questions to determine what they want to do, was enlightening. How to choose a fulfilling career is not taught or discussed enough. My dad used to joke that whatever industry you started in would most likely be the industry you will be in for your entire career, so pick wisely. However, I've heard other folks say, "get a job to get experience." Asking these questions throughout your career and life, will be helpful. Doing some soul-searching along the way will help keep you from finding yourself stuck in a job or industry you don't like. Asking these questions after significant life events (getting married, having children) could help identify needed changes.

Something else important I learned from the book, is the reasoning behind how older generations have developed their way of thinking. Having a better understanding could have helped me when I asked for my first raise (just because I was there for a year, I thought I "deserved" it). My manager at that time acknowledged my hard work, and that they were pleased with me. He then asked me if I would like him to ask *his* boss if he should give me a raise, even though the company was not doing well at that time. He got his point across without beating me up. I think back and realize he didn't say what he probably wanted to say. If he did, I would have been depressed and had less productivity. The discussion on how and when Millennials should approach conversations with their superiors about advancement and compensation was helpful.

I am very excited to be a part of a generation that values a balanced work/life balance! The workplace, unfortunately, sometimes looks down on that phrase. The book discusses how Millennials can approach this topic in interviews and gives some options on how to use words that other generations will respond to positively. I feel like the minute a Traditionalist or Boomer hears the phrase "work-life balance," they prejudge what is about to be said or discussed, or possibly the person. What Millennials are saying is, "we as Millennials have experienced first-hand, as children and young adults, what happens when work becomes more of a focus than having a healthy personal life."

Lastly, the info to help Millennials who are currently in organizations that are managed in an authoritarian manner by a Boomer or Traditionalist was helpful. Lots of people will benefit from the advice on what to do if their firm continues to be successful with this approach, thereby never seeing a need to change. Do you get out sooner rather than later? If your firm mainly motivates by money, how do leaders learn there are other ways to reward and get intended behavior, beyond money?

Ross

Brent Sucher, CMP, Marketing Director

All of this is great. Seriously, I learned a lot from the book. From my perspective, one of the most significant issues the book addressed was, "Why any Millennial or Gen Z might even care about leadership in the first place?!" Be it what others think about it, or the way they currently do things.

"Why should I care? And if I do, what now?" The answer is simple; If you understand and apply the book's content in your communications with others, you will unlock the door to promotions, better income, and happiness in your field while gaining the respect of other generations.

The book is bigger than any one of us. It helps people see not just generational differences, but also cultural differences, something that Millennials and Gen Z care about profoundly: sensitivity to identity! Different generations, by default, don't engage on a personal level. Understanding people's personalities and management styles is like acquiring the ability to speak another language. The book's real-life examples and contexts are priceless, "context is power."

One of my most eye-opening takeaways from this book was seeing the side-by-side comparisons of how each generation might handle the same problem or situation,

and then discuss how each other generation should manage them. If we as a generation are going to strive to be catalysts of change, to create work environments that value people, which are fulfilling, it's our responsibility to HELP management to identify the value and return we bring to the table. Building multi-generational teams that want to help one another succeed produces a positive winning environment. There are plenty of stats to back that up, and this book is full of practical "how to's."

The wording is conversational, "big picture," and purpose-driven. The book takes the time to paint a picture for Millennials and Gen Z about how old work environments used to be, and it gives the context of each generation's tendencies and their "why." It uses short comparisons of crucial differences that provide meaning to readers who are new to leadership and who might not even know that generations think differently. The section on professional advancement and the human resources lingo used when hiring leaders and managers a HUGE value. The advice will help you earn respect in the interview process and with seasoned peers.

This book matters. It matters to help win the respect of people from other generations, and prove we don't suck, because our generation is awesome and great!

Brent

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Preface

I love working with Millennials and Gen Z. Maybe that's because my children are a part of the Millennial and Gen Z generations. I love them deeply and don't want them to have to enter a workforce led by Gen Xers and Baby Boomers who don't get the flow of our modern society. You may be asking yourself, "Why should you care about what others think, and why should others care about the way you do things?" Millennials and Gen Z want to be "real."

The struggle is real; the first step in making a positive difference in this world, and your life, is to become a leader. All leaders must have followers for nothing great happens without a team. Becoming a great leader that can grow an organization or lead a movement requires a leader that can develop and lead other leaders. "Great" doesn't come just because a person has years of experience. It takes training and applying the art and science of leadership to experience. Open your mind to knowledge and understand that you don't know what you don't know.

Introduction

Welcome!

Thanks for joining with me in learning the art and science of effective leadership. Whether you are a Millennial, Gen Z, Gen X, Baby Boomer, or Traditionalist, you're reading this because of a desire to lead well. Organizations need competent positive leaders! America and the world need you!

Generation Age Group Definitions

There has been much debate on when each generation's birth years begin and end. Pew research is one of the most trusted research sites, so I am using their definitions.

- Traditionalist: Born 1928-1945.

- Baby Boomers: Born 1946-1964.

- Gen X: Born 1965 – 1980.

- Millennials: Born 1981-1996.

- Gen Z: Born 1997 – 2012.[1]

[1] (Dimock, 2019)

A Note to Gen Z and Millennials

If you're a Millennial or in Gen Z, this book shows you how to win the confidence of Gen Xers and Baby Boomers. You will learn how to prove you don't suck and how to succeed as a leader in a workplace dominated by Gen X and Baby Boomers.

A Note to Gen X and Baby Boomers

If you're a Gen Xer, this book will help you flourish in a multigenerational workforce and prepare to take the reins as Boomers begin retiring in large numbers. If you're a Boomer, this book provides useful advice on how to mitigate the risk of business interruptions due to the retirement tsunami that is coming, as well as recoup some of the over $550 billion disengaged employees are estimated to cost American corporations.[2]

While this book intends to transfer knowledge to help you become a better leader, its wording has a less formal feel. It's more of a conversation, a book of real-life stories from various business people and places, and it's big-picture and purpose-driven. As you read each story, think about each generation's life experiences, where they are coming from, and why?

A key to unlocking relationships is understanding the other person's "why." Why do they think, act, and react the way

[2] (Gallup, 2017)

they do? When you know, you'll be better positioned to motivate others to follow you no matter what their age.

My greatest wish for the Millennial and Gen Z generations is that they learn how to lead our society and economy to new heights, without all the hang-ups of past generational transitions. Remember, every generation "sucked" to the ones that came before them. As long as we're all in the same boat, let's grow together and improve our workplaces and lives.

What is Etymology and Why Should I Care?

In the 1970s, when I was in elementary school, we had a teacher who would punish us for using the phrase 'aw shucks.' He told us it was a curse word. WTH, a curse word? Sure enough, at one time, it meant 'oh sh*t' and was considered profanity! Now it is a term that expresses shy embarrassment. [3] The Stack Exchange is a great place to read about a word's past, mainstream, and modern meaning or etymology. Etymology is the study of word origins. As society changes, the essence of words can change or take on more than one meaning. Their use and acceptance may diversify as well.[4] Not only can word meanings change, but each generation adds new words. For example, if you search for terms such as; adulting, woke, salty, kiki, no cap, etc., you can find lots of articles

[3] (Stack Exchange, n.d.)
[4] (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2019)

on Millennial and Gen Z lingo.[5] Communication is a two-sided process; make sure to participate effectively.[6] **Ask yourself, "do I practice active listening when talking with members of different generations?"**

In the back of our minds, we know that words and word meanings change over time. Traditionalists, Boomers, and Gen Xers consider the words you got in trouble for saying when you were young. How many of those words, like 'aw-shucks' mean something different now? Never has the essence or meaning behind words changed so quickly as it does today. The digital and Internet age has unleashed society's ability to form new lingo, propagate slang, and modify word meaning. Try reading a Gen Z's text string, good luck if you are over 40! On the flip side, some changes add richness to our life and business experiences. **Either way, we must all realize that what we hear may not be what another person is saying.** If you don't understand something, don't judge, ask for clarification, and practice active listening.

[5] (Borge, 2019)
[6] (Pearce, 2007)

Chapter 1: Getting Your "Why" On

A Dead Leader Walking

In 2017, while in the Caribbean, I met a young American leader who was 28 years old. He had cultivated a following of 15,000 Millennials and paid for his trip by leasing his list of followers to marketing departments. His primary clients were liquor distributors who paid him $5000 every few months to throw flash parties and another $5000-$15,000 to show them how to market their products to Millennials better.

He did a magnificent job of promoting himself through social media, and his parties were epic. The liquor distributors rented the venues, hired bands, set up tasting tables and beer stands, food trucks, etc. His average gathering drew 2000-3000 people. As we talked, I shared some of my corporate leadership experiences, and he asked me some questions. He wanted my opinion on why he hadn't been able to keep a corporate job or obtain promotions. "Why do I keep getting fired," he asked. **"Why don't leaders at work listen to me, I get so frustrated with them, I end up just quitting. Now no one trusts me enough to hire me into a position with responsibility."**

I asked him to explain each situation, and the bottom line was he had no idea how corporations promote people, how HR operates, and that there are measures of employee value. Nor did he respect or relate to other generations. This talented young man thought that he was already a leader because he was able to gather a following on social media. He was right to a degree; he had followers, but for how long? He understood how to lead a group of young, energetic, party-going peers, and he was great at it, but he had no idea how to be a leader of leaders, produce leaders, or be a leader in any other context. Because he refused to embrace the fact that 50% of leadership is a natural ability, and 50% is a learned science, he never progressed past his current state. He chose not to learn how to expand his reach or sustain his success. **He became a dead leader walking.**

Leadership and Organizational Growth

Here was a talented, smart young person, who could talk to his peers, but had no idea how to interact with or lead his parents' or grandparents' generations. He was bitter because life was more complicated than what his mother had taught him. His mom was always saying, "do the right thing, get good grades, pay attention in school, and you'll get a good job and life will be good." **However, in today's competitive world and economy, doing the basics right doesn't guarantee life will work out the right way.** You must gain specific knowledge and skills to succeed.

He didn't know or understand the five pillars of organization leadership for growth or what it takes to be successful at each one:

- Challenging the status quo with positive innovation.
- Inspiring a vision and set of goals that result in mutual commitment from all employees.
- Building teams that are empowered and are interdependent upon one another to succeed.
- Modeling the behaviors you espouse to others.
- Encouraging the hearts of employees so that they work through difficult times, striving to achieve the mutual vision and goals set before them.[7]

All five pillars of organization leadership for growth require an understanding of how and why each generation thinks the way they do. Gaining an understanding of the assumptions, beliefs, and norms of those you are trying to lead is critical in motivating today's multi-generational, multi-cultural workforce.

How things work out is up to you. There is no magic wand; it takes smarts, hard work, time, education, and wisdom. The dead leader walking's career was severely limited because he didn't know what he didn't know. Don't make the same mistake; choose to learn to lead.

[7] (Johnson & Johnson, 2013)

Millennials Don't Suck; They're Awesome

It seems that all I hear from my Gen X and Baby Boomer friends is how Millennials suck. They suck in their work ethic, feel entitled, their attitudes suck, and they don't respect us. "They suck, they suck, they suck." Do you hear the same?

There is a misconception that Millennials are oversensitive, lazy, and uncommitted. Instead, data shows they are passionate, hard workers, and active in social causes. Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, and Brown's study set out to separate the myths from reality and how the generational differences affect the workplace. Millennials make learning a priority and find happiness in their families.[8] While Millennials may not be as independent as Gen Xers, they are full of confidence and sensitivity.[9] Another study done by social scientists, Leuenberger and Klüver, also found that the younger generations desire more frequent feedback than what is provided in annual evaluations.[10] They want feedback so they can improve their performance. In our diverse workforce, values will differ among the generations based on "beliefs, values, goals, work attitudes, world views, and attitudes toward leadership," which develop throughout our lifetimes.[11]

[8] (Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007)
[9] (Kapoor & Solomon, 2011)
[10] (Green & Roberts, 2012)
[11] (Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007)

These values shape our attitudes and willingness to adapt to change.

Emerging leaders take note! If you, as an emerging leader, bring positive and definite answers to workplace challenges, you will have the chance to establish yourself as a prospective leader and begin building positive relationships with those who can promote you.

Every Generation's Characteristics are Different

Every generation has its own set of characteristics. Gen Z thinks one way, younger Millennials another, older Millennials still another, Gen Xers another, and Baby Boomers, yes…still another. It seems a million books are advising Gen Xers and Baby Boomers on how to lead Millennials, but few, if any, focus on helping Millennials and Gen Z understand how to become leaders.

The analog world in which Boomers and Traditionalists learned to lead, no longer exists. It's time for the Millennial generation to step into leadership roles and lead our corporations, tech industries, and organizations. It's time for Gen Z to become emergent leaders and start thinking about how they want the world to look over the next century.

We, as senior leaders, need to make way for them, mentor them, and help them understand how we tick, not the other way around. According to Pew Research, there are

56 million Millennials in the workforce, and by 2020 nearly half of all workers will be Millennials, outnumbering Gen Xers![12]

Millennials and Gen Z listen up! The older generations don't have the same world view as you, and if they do, they rank their values in a different priority order than you! Unless you begin to understand how Gen Xers and Boomers think, you're screwed when it comes to leading us!

Generational Transitions

I was born in 1965 in the first year of Generation X. I grew up in the middle of the transition from an analog to a digital world, from a manufacturing-based economy to a tech and services-based economy. I was an original gamer and Donkey Kong master. I started on Pong, Mattel's classic handheld football games, then Nintendo's RBI Baseball, Zelda, NHL Hockey, and Sega's Sonic the Hedgehog. I gamed my way through every system. Even after I was married and had children, our family's first game console was mine. It was an original Play Station and was a Christmas gift from my wife, (I bought it for myself, wrapped it and labeled it from Mrs. Claus to Santa, LOL)! My favorite game was a flight simulator and Crash Bandicoot. My kids introduced me to Sim City, Medal of Honor, Halo, and others when we got our first Xbox.

[12] (Fry, 2018) (Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007)

I'm sure lots of Millennial gamers are reminiscing about their youth right now, and Baby Boomers are wondering what in the world is he saying? That's my point exactly! Although my children grew up as gamers, I don't see the world as Millennials, or Gen Z do, and they don't view the world as I do! Now add Boomers and Traditionalists into the mix, who grew up in an analog world with no digital gaming at all, and that alone is enough to demonstrate how our world views can differ. These world view differences cause communication, relationship, and trust issues!

Let's look backward from a Boomer's perspective. I was a first-generation gamer, but a second-generation nerd! My father, a Traditionalist, worked his way up from being an original punch card mainframe coder, to a leader at McDonnell Douglas and IBM's information systems business. He's a first-generation nerd. He used punch cards to code computers. YES, just like in the movie Hidden Figures, he was one of those white shirt, blue tie mainframe computer geeks, and he loved it. He went on to code in FORTRAN and COBOL and then to write much of IBM's original quality assurance and risk management strategies. Even today, he tells me he sometimes dreams in COBOL and writes programs in his sleep! He was a great leader inside and outside of work. However, guess who struggled to connect with his elders and with his children?! That's right, even with all the things we shared,

we still had difficulty communicating, having a relationship, and building trust as father and son. Thank God, as we've gotten more mature, we have developed a great relationship.

Every generation seems to say the same thing about the generations that precede and follow them, "We just don't get the _____ generation!" Even though my family had the benefit of being early adopters of technology (my father and I were nerds, and my children and I are gamers), we each have distinct ways in which we see the world. We base what we believe and see upon the society and time in which we each grew up. All generations have differences between them, and generational interactions get even more complicated when considering geographic and regional differences as well. People in California think differently than do Floridians, than do New Yorkers, Texans, Midwesterners, and so on.

Communication, Relationship, and Trust

Each generation's viewpoints have value; understanding them is essential to the growth of the others. We must learn to lead each other. It is vital to facilitate effective communication and have innovative thinking in managing human resources. These elements will help create a work-life balance that will include professional development and well-being while increasing your productivity. Leadership development helps to accomplish these goals.

Thierry Pauchant, Ph.D., professor at Montreal HEC, pointed out that leadership has focused on leaders and their followers rather than the development of leadership.[13] **To gain credibility, a leader must be real, relevant, and respectful of each generation's cultural needs.**

For instance, Millennials are not as forgiving as other generations for ineptitude and lack of leadership skills.[14] In other words, Millennials judge leaders more harshly than the older generations do. They forgive of their peers more than their leaders. These traits make it more challenging for them to develop strong relationships with leaders their age, much less those of older generations. It takes clear, concise, and frequent communication, healthy relationships, and trust to gain followers. **No one is a leader unless they have followers.**

Note to Millennials and Gen Z: If you can't relate and be more tolerant and forgiving of leaders of all ages, you'll stunt your career growth and get passed over for leadership roles. One reason why studying different leadership methods is so important is to overcome this obstacle.

[13] (Green & Roberts, 2012)
[14] (Kapoor & Solomon, 2011)

If you struggle with interpersonal relationships, that's ok. You can change that. Coming from a technology background, I know many managers who struggle with interpersonal relationships and social skills. They've often become experts in their field because they were inquisitive. However, when a person is at the expert stage of leadership development they are self-focused. I advise when a person's center of locus is inward; they are open to developing neurosis and obsessions. However, if they can learn to shift their focus on meeting their team's and superior's needs, it opens them to see beyond themselves and to build relationships. This advice is suitable for anyone who needs to reach across the generational gap. Focus on the other person. Use your natural curiosity and concentrate on finding out about the other person. If you take this approach, people are far more likely to open up to you. Along the way, you will more than likely find common ground upon which to build.

Why Keep Reading this Book?

If you're a Millennial or in Gen Z, and you want to lead, especially if you're going to lead Gen X and Boomers, you're going to have to embrace the struggle and learn how to communicate with the older generations. Understanding why they learned to lead in specific ways and how they view leadership roles is critical. It's time to start building trusted relationships with other generations.

If you're a Gen Xer or Boomer, and you want to raise the next generation of leaders and grow your business, "deal with it," the world has changed. Our economy is no longer based on manufacturing. Leadership styles, like command and control, are no longer respected or effective. Machiavellian principled leadership styles are offensive to today's workers, and qualified talent will not stay if led that way. We must learn how to communicate, have relationships, and build strong trust bonds with our children's generation. It's our responsibility to lead by example and bring positive change, bettering everyone's work-life balance while maintaining workplace effectiveness.

Chapter 2: Leaders Are Dropping Like Flies

A Tsunami is Forming

On August 13, 1868, in New Zealand, business leaders and workers were going about their daily routines, mothers were preparing their children for school, and planning the day's activities and chores. No one expected that shortly their lives and the lives of their countrymen would be changed forever. Thousands of miles away, one of the most massive earthquakes in modern history struck South America. It was approximately 9.0 on the Richter scale. The quake's shock wave started a wave in the Pacific Ocean. As it traveled across the ocean, the swell grew larger and larger, forming a massive tsunami. Hours later, without warning, 25,000 souls passed into the afterlife, hundreds of businesses were devastated, and damages totaled $300 million.[15]

When unprepared, tsunamis can be a devastating event. This same type of event repeated itself over and over until modern-age communication and meteorological technology began to predict and warn people of these events. Even so, on March 11, 2011. Thirty-three-foot waves traveling 500 miles per hour struck a nuclear power plant in Japan, creating one of the most significant nuclear

[15] (eCoast, 2018)

disasters of our lifetime. At that time, the World Bank estimated that it would take five years to recover from the $235 billion in financial devastation and the 452,000 displaced people resulting from the tsunami.[16] The results were stress on the global supply chain for more than two years.

The generational shift in the workforce is swelling. **The U.S. Department of Labor predicts a significant shift in the makeup of the workforce.[17]** The resulting tsunami of change will open leadership doors for Millennial and Gen Z employees to advance into leadership faster than earlier generations. The question is, will they (you) be ready to fill the tens of thousands of vacant leadership roles that are coming? If we, as current leaders, do not help support this transition, what will happen? What will be the cost?

Current leaders, we must prepare and grow emergent leaders by learning to communicate with and value each other and our differences. Emerging leaders need to engage in leadership training. If we do our parts, we'll help ensure smooth leadership transitions and avoid business disruptions due to lackluster leadership benches.

[16] (Phillips, 2011)
[17] (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019)

We Need a New Wave of Leaders

As our nation's workforce ages at an alarming rate, the warning signals are telling us to prepare, but will we do so? If we are to weather the coming generational shift and retirement storm, we must begin to create new leaders from the younger generations, pass on our leadership wisdom, and prepare the way for them. To accomplish this task, corporate leaders will need to understand and sponsor:

- Millennial and Gen Z team work ethics.
- Mentor and reverse mentor emerging leaders.
- Re-invigorate disengaged employees.
- Attract and retain top talent.
- How to modernize and expand communication channels.
- Win the hearts of emerging leaders through sustainable leadership.
- Incorporate transformation and servant-based leadership ideals.
- Identify potential leaders.
- Manage a kaleidoscope of assumptions, beliefs, and norms.
- Build trust and relationships with multiple generations.
- Re-evaluate their team's generational diversity.

The U.S. Department of Labor reports that younger generations are entering the workforce later, and portions of the older generations are working longer. Those who are working later in life are filling jobs normally filled by 16 to 24-year-old workers. The younger generations are taking longer to graduate from college and therefore enter the workforce later. **Teams are becoming more diverse in their generational makeup.** Leaders will have to know how to relate, motivate, and lead people from all generations. The Department of Labor predicts this trend to continue until 2028.[18]

We must take this opportunity to ready ourselves and our businesses to avoid the devastating effects of having a shallow pool of leaders. No one should expect new and emerging leaders to navigate the coming turbulent waters unless we train and support them.

Catch the Vibe, Ride the Wave

In 2001, I was living in Atlanta, but working for our Scottsdale, AZ, division. Every other week I flew into Scottsdale and then back home to manage the Atlanta facility. For the past year, there had been changes happening in the human resources and marketing divisions, and the company hired a new senior vice president of marketing (SVP). The first project she gave our team was to start documenting our knowledge.

[18] (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019)

Writing down our learned knowledge threw up red flags for me. Once we wrote down our intellectual property (IP), stored it on our hard drives, and uploaded it into the shared enterprise content management (ECM) system, the vast majority of us would no longer be needed. (BTW - at the time, the storage technology was cutting edge, using "the cloud," impressive, huh?!). I tried to warn my colleagues that a reduction in force (RIF) was coming, but they laughed me off. They thought, "after all, the company still needs people, right?"

While they sat comfortably at their desks, working on the documentation project, I reached out to another company in our industry. One that we beat all the time using the marketing and sales strategies I had created. I figured they would jump at the chance to hire the person who was authoring the approach to which they were losing, and I was right. They thought I would bring a lot of value to their team and could help them turn their sales revenue around, and I did!

As we negotiated my employment package, I continued to give 110% to my current employer and finished the documentation project. A few weeks later, I flew into Scottsdale, AZ, as usual, only to walk into a building with the oddest, somber atmosphere I had ever experienced. Several people in grey suits greeted me, and there were two armed guards in each hallway. The "suits" asked me to follow them quietly, and they took me to one of our

meeting rooms where my colleagues were sitting. I thought to myself, "This is so bizarre!" I asked one of my friends what was going on, and he let me know that the new SVP had flown in with her HR team and was handing out severance packages! I had walked into a corporate wake and was attending the division's funeral. Even the air inside the building felt heavy and sad!

This atmosphere was completely different than it had been the past few years. Usually, this was the happiest and most fun-filled work environment in which I had ever worked. We were known for being the creative innovation hub for the entire $3 billion, 30,000 employee operation. We had the freedom to build a creative, innovative atmosphere. We were the first to adopt business casual attire, and on Fridays the guys could wear jeans, and the women sundresses, and who cared if we wore open-toed shoes that day?! Heck, half of us wore Nikes and sandals. What's even more remarkable, is that our offices were across the street from the PGA TPC course, and we would grab hotdogs and hit a bucket of balls for lunch at the driving range (drop mic)!

Note to Millennials and Gen Z: To understand how creative and progressive our division was, let's contrast it to the rest of the company. If you were in sales, the managers required suit and ties for the men, and suit or dress for the woman, with no open-toed shoes. The office layout placed managers' offices along the walls, while

everyone else sat at five-foot-wide cubical style desks. Your desk had a tower computer (PC) that sat under your desk and a landline phone. Each person had to report in at 8:00 am, tell their manager which customers they were going to visit that day, come back to the office no later than 4:30 pm and report on the day's events. Even if you lived in your sales territory, you still had to make these useless drives! You would have to drive out of your area to report to the office and then drive back, even if it was an hour each way! What a waste of time (BTW mind blown yet? If not, keep reading.).

Asking to telecommute (work remote) meant you were lazy, you couldn't be trusted, there must be something wrong with you, or you were most likely interviewing with another company, and they should probably fire you. Many sales compensation plans used a recoverable draw commission system. If you don't know what that is, ask an old-timer. It meant, if you didn't sell anything or meet your quota, you had to pay back your salary. That's why it's called a draw. The company gave you an advance or a 'draw' against your monthly sales. If you didn't sell, you owed them!

Let's get back to the story. The issue was, depending on which senior leader you asked, we were either innovative leaders or complete corporate rebels! To the gloom-and-doom "starched-shirt ice queen of the Northeast" new SVP, we were rebels. She didn't like our style, and she

was there to shut us down. One by one, I watched my friends get RIFed. Three, six, and nine-month severance packages were handed out, depending on the length of employment. If you were lucky enough to receive a job offer, the entire operation was moving to the Northeast.

While I was observing the ominous events, my director walked in and asked why I was in the room. We went to his office, and he explained that the new SVP was firing 75 out of 110 of our staff members. Not because they sucked, we were the second most innovative industry program in the nation, but because the new SVP was a Traditionalist. She saw our creative culture as a threat to the way she thought. She was a laggard and hated our creative atmosphere. She liked to have command and wanted to squeeze everyone to fit inside her little traditional box. Although my director, my teammates, and I had kept our positions and gained more clout, I had already packed my parachute. I jumped to a smaller $1 billion company with better upward mobility. Moreover, I landed higher in leadership and took my first national role.

What's the moral of this story? Business seasons have signs. Like surfing in the ocean, if you pay attention, you can predict when a wave is coming, feel its vibe, and ride it to a better place. **Are you aware of the business environment surrounding you?** Don't be like my former peers and get swallowed up in the wash.

Waves of Change

During that season of my career, I experienced a rogue wave. Rogue waves are those that are in the middle of the ocean, stick up higher than the others, but don't affect the direction of the primary current. We had made transformative headway into a more modern way of doing business. We were riding a real wave; we were innovative leaders. However, a rogue wave, in the form of a laggard SVP from another era, with outdated ideas, fighting against the flow of change came in and shut us down. Her only legacy was one of domination and destruction.

From that time on, the company struggled to grow. The board of directors made more poor appointments and hired a lackluster CEO, its stock lost 50% of its value, and people lost hundreds of thousands of dollars from their retirement accounts. Another traditionally managed company eventually acquired the company, and in 2018 it had to restructure, cutting 4000 jobs, and it is at risk of bankruptcy. Today, Glassdoor.com rates it as a "Stay Away." **Watch out for rogue waves and be aware of real current changes in the primary flow.**

Business seasons and work environments have an atmosphere, a temperature, a feeling, a vibe, and analytical markers that point out the primary flow's direction. If we are actively listening, we'll recognize that we talk about these change indicators in our social conversations, over dinner, drinks, or a glass of wine.

One evening my wife and I, who are Gen Xers, were at our friends' house for dinner. Six of our close friends (three couples) joined us. Two of the couples are Baby Boomers, and two are Gen Xers like us. When we arrived, we hugged and gave welcome kisses (on the cheek, LOL) as usual. After a short time chatting, the gals went into the dining room, and the guys sat in the living room. As the guys updated each other on life, they asked me about my doctoral studies and the subject of this book.

Note: The names have been changed to protect the innocent, LOL!

Chuck began talking about how fascinated he was with my research on workplace behavior on leadership and the generations. He joked about how he likes to watch funny videos about Millennials on the web. Chuck works for the government and said they have generation diversity classes on how to work with other generations. He started discussing common perceptions of Millennials from his Baby Boomer perspective. As soon as he began, Jim, a Baby Boomer, and John, a Gen Xer, started chiming right in. They were each telling stories about how Millennials had helicopter parenting, participation trophies, lack of work ethic, feelings of entitlement, and no sense of commitment to anything. *Millennials need to adjust to the way they see the world, just like we were expected to by our leaders.* Then turning to me, they asked if my in-depth

look showed the same things. **Are Millennials really like that?**

Most Boomers and Gen X leaders are interested in working with and understanding the younger generations. Chuck attended all the generational diversity training classes he could. He also asked me lots of questions over the next six months. I was able to share a different point of view about Millennials and Gen Z than portrayed in the media. I hope I helped him in some small way because he is now running an entire government division. Crossing the generational 'aisle' pays off. Consider reaching out and striking up a conversation with other generations. **Realize the other generations are just as uncomfortable facing the wave of change as you,** and Gen Xers feel trapped by the generational shift.

Gen X: A Wave of Dissatisfaction

The undertow of workplace dissatisfaction is pulling Gen X down. They've already been hit by a change wave, and their needs are being overlooked at work. They are called the forgotten generation, and that's how they feel. They are more likely to be passed over for promotions more often than their younger and older counterparts.[19] They are the most unhappy work generation since the founding of America.[20] There are many reasons for this. For

[19] (Craver, 2019)
[20] (Hill, 2019)

instance, the fear of being replaced, losing their job, and the consequences that may follow, i.e., not being able to support their families. Operational strategists realize a typical Gen Xer will put in long stress-filled work hours, without complaining or jumping from job to job. They use these fears against them when it comes to workplace concessions and the environment in which they work.[21] Gen Xers watch their needs go unmet, while the company makes changes to accommodate Millennial needs.

Gen Xers are rethinking their quality of life. It is becoming more frequent for mid-career Gen Xers to leave their lucrative roles to find work that is more fulfilling and enjoyable. They are picking up on the trend of work-life balance.[22]

The Great Wave of Disengaged Workers

Gen X's disenchantment with work, and Traditionalists' and Boomers' impending retirements are fueling workforce disengagement. In the private business sector, only 33% of American employees are engaged at work as compared to the world's best organizations where 70% of workers are engaged.[23] The cost of disengaged employees for U. S. companies is $483 billion to $605 billion a year, yet

[21] (Eisenberg, 2019)
[22] (Hill, 2019)
[23] (Sorenson & Garman, 2013)

leaders and managers who focus on employees' strengths can eliminate workforce disengagement.[24]

Chances are you have at least one disengaged worker in your office. They're the ones who are there but aren't there. The ones who never have an answer, and always expect the workgroup to make up for the work they don't get done. Dreaming of retirement is just one reason why employees become disengaged. Other causes are; burnout , disenchantment with current managers, the lack of mentoring, and limited upward mobility. At some point in their careers, many people experience at least one of these.

Note to Emerging Leaders: Providing answers that recoup some of the lost revenue spent on disengaged workers is a terrific way to prove your worth as a leader. One modern strategy to do so is called Appreciative Inquiry (AI). It is a set of skills based on positive psychology. Current and emerging leaders should develop these skills, and we will talk more about them in later chapters. These skills help combat disengagement from the beginning and help disengaged workers re-engage. AI focuses on employee and company strengths. It is a positive, healthy leadership strategy. Leaders also need to recognize equality and diversity in the workplace and use them as positive sources of energy and not

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[24] (Gallup, 2017)

division.[25] An excellent strategy to be recognized as a leader at work is to use AI techniques, such as engaging in "World Café" style meetings.[26]

The Monster Wave of Retiring Leaders

In the **United States government sector, almost 60% of employees are eligible to retire**, and the "senior management cohort consists mainly of Baby Boomers, which is setting the stage for conflict with the post-modernism orientation of the Generation X and Millennials that are replacing retiring employees."[27] Research also identified that the government is concerned that **their human capital is at "high risk"** and that unless management takes this issue seriously**, they will be looking at a "retirement tsunami."**[28] There's a monster wave of change swelling in the workplace's makeup as Traditionalists disappear, Boomers prepare to retire, and the number of Millennials who are entering the workplace increases.[29]

This monster wave has been swelling for a while, and it's getting ready to crest. If you're going to successfully navigate and ride this monster, and take your place in leadership, you're going to need to be a(n):

25 (Sorenson & Garman, 2013)
26 (The World Cafe', 2019)
27 (Green & Roberts, 2012)
28 (Green & Roberts, 2012)
29 (Fry, 2018)

- Overcomer.
- Sincere communicator.
- Relationship builder.
- Emotionally and culturally woke.
- Creative innovator.
- Team builder.
- Bridge-building, chasm-crossing, gap-filling, motivational leader.

To ride this wave, current and emerging leaders need to work together. This merging of the generations needs a coordinated effort to make sure that upper management transfers its experiential wisdom and organizational knowledge to its emerging leaders. We must bridge the gaps between Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Gen Z.[30]

Today's business climate, its indicators, its temperature, its vibe, is one pointing to a wave of millions of people who are re-evaluating their lives, disengaged at work, and focused on retiring. There is a wave swelling for the need for tens of thousands of new leaders. Prepare yourself and get trained. Position yourself to fill a more vital role and to have more responsibility, and increased pay. **You want to ride this wave!**

[30] (Green & Roberts, 2012)

Chapter 3: Differences in Value Systems

The Priority Difference in Values

In one of my entrepreneurial ventures, I developed a "three-legged stool" business plan for myself and two close friends. All three of us were from different generations and had the same values. The business plan would only work if each of us executed our part as written. Each of us was an expert in our respective areas, and the venture was a smashing success at first, but as time progressed, a fracture opened and became very apparent to two of us. The third person was utterly blind to the issue. The problem was, although we valued the same things, we ranked them differently...

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About Greg Buschman, Ph.D.(c)

I am a husband and father of four young adults. As you will see on my personal webpage, my family and I love to travel, spend family time, and explore different cultures and their histories; www.gregbuschman.us.

I started in business as an entrepreneur and learned to squeeze 60-hours of work into 40-hours (*or less)*. Effective-efficiency served me well, and in my first corporate role, I made rookie of the year by revitalizing an underperforming territory. As a regional/national leader, I transformed underperforming teams, departments, and divisions into high performers. As measured by industry averages my areas of responsibility produced millions of dollars in incremental growth, outpaced industry averages, and received national and global recognition. Today, I'm finishing my behavioral sciences doctorate in leadership and organizational development in "Creative Leadership for Innovation and Change." I hold master's degrees in IT and marketing management; MSIS and MSMKT.

Who I help:
I help current and emerging leaders and their organizations improve performance. I use strategies proven in my career as a top-performing leader, and those

used by the world's most successful organizations. Although I cannot make any claims of an increase in your income or business outcomes, I do believe I may be able to help you be more successful and achieve better results.

How I help:
I coach leaders and organizations on how to unlock their leadership potential and the power of the multi-generational/multi-cultural workforce. I lead them through a series of step-by-step leadership development strategies. The focus is on producing positive people behaviors, positive work environments, and positive business outcomes. Following these proven strategies, leaders are better able to guide teams to meet or exceed expectations while improving their work-life experiences.

Expertise:
Multi-generational & Multi-cultural Leadership | Speaking | Advising | Leadership Coaching | Change Management | Organizational Development | Revitalization | Education

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