LEADING ACROSS GENERATIONS

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Building Great Workplaces Upon Ageless Principles of Leadership

What will careers of the future look like? The answer to job security is rapidly evolving away from cradle-to-grave employment. Instead, a better guarantee of continued employability might lie in one’s ability to upskill and re-skill constantly, and to navigate seasonal and cyclical work availability through a combination of tech nomadism and robust professional networking. Tamara Jayne investigates one aspect of these changing employment structures by speaking to three freelancers and one business owner—all of whom rely on the Malaysian gig economy to pay their bills or keep their show running.

Last but not least, we’ve got you a comeback for the next time a grouchy colleague vents on Facebook that he’s had it with millennials and their bratty ways! Respond to the rant in style by sharing Awatif Ghapar’s insights, informed by research as well as her personal perspective as a millennial. Or post Travis Bradberry’s short but punchy myth-buster on the same topic. Backed with findings from a global study by IBM, his article reminds us to listen more and assume less about what works for co-workers going through life stages different from our own.

How have you or your organisation found ways to achieve synergy and great outcomes in diverse teams? We’d love to hear your stories, so don’t hesitate to write in to editor@leaderonomics.com or visit www.facebook.com/leaderonomics.

It’s not the years of experience but the experience that counts. —Anonymous

Nothing bridges the generational gap like a genuine personal connection.

The centrespread stories address the importance of not stereotyping or over-generalising on the characteristics of employees according to their age group. Sandy Clarke offers tips on how to celebrate workforce diversity, and let differences in employee needs and life stages guide processes and policies for more productive outcomes. Johan Merican and Salika Sukswan challenge employers to get to know employees with the professional rigour they apply to understanding customers.

As TalentCorp Diversity Advocates, Johan and Salika draw on a wealth of industry-based case studies to show how leading employers are creating workplace experiences that address the diverse needs of today’s multigenerational workforce. Don’t forget to go to www.leaderonomics.com for exclusive web content—case studies on how PwC and PKT Logistics are equipping their workforce for success across various age groups.

Regardless of what kind of fashion was in style when we were growing up, each of us has one—if you’re lucky, more than one—ex-boss who modelled for us the kind of leader we hope to be someday. Jeff Haden provides a rundown of those qualities that characterise unforgettable bosses. It’s also a great checklist to help us reflect how we’re doing in our own respective capacities as leaders today.

As baby boomer Peter Economy weighs in on how we can better understand our Gen Y colleagues, not only as members of the workforce, but also consumers shaped by a combination of tech-savviness and ideals informed by globalisation.

Jonathan Fitzgerald and Heather Morse write from their combined experience as the managing partner and marketing director of their respective law firms. They suggest ways to bridge differences in working and communication styles so that colleagues of different age groups can better appreciate the similarities of their common goals and values.

For other great leadership insights, including those by John Maxwell, visit www.leaderonomics.com. If you missed any of our past issues, go to www.leaderonomics.com/publications and download for FREE!
Benjamin Franklin was one of the founding fathers of the United States, and was widely recognised as an expert across several different subjects. He's my hero, not least of all, because to his mind, the impossible was nothing more than a possibility that had simply been fostered. In other words, there was no such thing as “impossible”. The only barrier between what was and what could be was, he believed, our own limiting thoughts: as soon as you begin with, “It can’t be done”...90% of the battle is already lost. Believe is what sparks curiosity, which in turn fosters innovation, leading to creation. A few weeks ago, we had a retreat for all employees at Leaderonomics. We had loads of fun together and at the end of the retreat, I was tasked to “inspire” the troops before we headed back to civilisation, and in turn fostering innovation, leading to creation. As Franklin was a central figure in the American Enlightenment and was lauded as Franklin, the answer was so clear forward. Franklin was one of the elite BE squad. Send us the video of yourself (title of the video: “The BE Team is special top squad. Beyond Expectations (BE)”) and tell us in the video why you truly believes that being part of something that creates lasting change and knowing that your efforts will continue to benefit people long after the work has been done. In my opinion, there are two ways to live: we can look at the odds stacked against us and give up before we’ve even tried; or, we can roll up our sleeves and try anyway, no matter how difficult the task in front of us seems. Throughout history, it’s the people who have chosen to see life through the second lens who have created change and the innovations once thought impossible. For me, this is why I keep returning To him, impossible was possible. 8. Humility: Imitate Jesus and Socrates. Every great leader I know is dedicated to self-improvement and learning. They know it is painful, yet they keep pushing themselves. And more importantly, each of them believe, deep down, that impossible is nothing. And that everything can be achieved with patience, learning, and hard work. And that is the secret of their success – belief!
The generational divide makes us look at the way we behave through different lenses and evolve our approach to ensure our professionalism and for our highest and best use.

By JONATHAN FITZGARRALD
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The four generations differ significantly to the degree needed, specifically to contributing, success, and leadership.

Often generation professionals, born between 1925 and 1946, were generally influenced by depression, which was why in the workplace they are risk-averse, need to be in control and are slow in changing.

WHAT BOOMERS NEED TO KNOW AND GEN Y

Often generation professionals, born between 1925 and 1946, were generally influenced by depression, which was why in the workplace they are risk-averse, need to be in control and are slow in changing.

HOW GEN X AND GEN Y WOULD WORK WITH BOOMERS
Understand that Boomers value face time over communicating via technology. Although you may encourage them to be more time-consuming or less efficient, make a point to stop by a Boomers office or pick up the phone as needed to send an email or text message.

Over communicate to demonstrate to the boomer that you are engaged and on top of it.

When transitioning clients and pitching prospects, offer to take the lead in getting some information and personal interactions. Recruit the Boomers to “be ambassadors” or find something they can be part of the marketing campaigns.

Above the Boomers may not be the regular contact, they need to feel valued and important.

Take it all in stride and give them the benefit of the doubt.
EMPOWERING THE INTER-GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

How companies tailor benefits and engagement for employees at various life stages

CONCLUSION

By JONAH MAHMUD MERICN and SALIMA DURKHAN

O

mance is increasingly containing with challenges as new opportunities emerge for an intergenerational workforce within a company. As set out in Accenture’s Answering Work in Asian report, 51% of Asian employees strongly believe that work-life balance is the new ‘holy grail’. This suggests a new paradigm of work is beginning to emerge, one where employees are increasingly looking for ways to ensure this balance in their lives.

This trend is not surprising. As the workforce of tomorrow faces a rapidly changing and unpredictable world, there’s a growing need for companies to address the needs of employees across different ages and life stages. This is a critical consideration for organizations looking to attract and retain top talent, as younger generations are increasingly prioritizing work-life balance and other benefits.

Addressing the needs of different generations is key to creating a more collaborative and productive workplace. By tailoring benefits and engagement strategies to meet the unique needs of each generation, companies can improve employee satisfaction and retention, which can have a positive impact on the bottom line.

In conclusion, the intergenerational workforce poses both a challenge and an opportunity for companies. By embracing diversity and understanding the different needs of each generation, companies can build a more inclusive and dynamic workplace that is better equipped to adapt to the rapidly changing business landscape.

Acknowledgments

This article was written by JONAH MAHMUD MERICN and SALIMA DURKHAN, who are consultants with Accenture in Malaysia. They are also the lead authors of the Answering Work in Asian report.

References


For more information, visit www.accenture.com/answerworkinasiaproject.
THE 9-TO-5 JOB IS DYING

STUDY SHOWS 40% OF THE WORKFORCE MAY BE FREELANCERS BY 2021...

By TAMARA JAYNE
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ELANCING, gigging and contract work are no longer new concepts in today’s workforce. Changes seen in the workforce have resulted in an increase in people setting out to pursue their careers through freelancing.

This change can be largely caused by millennials having different expectations (i.e. work culture, environment, job scope etc) as compared with the generations before. But can we truly blame them for giving the freedom and autonomy they have to choose when and how they work as opposed to the typical nine-to-five daily corporate grind?

The number of freelancers in Kuala Lumpur alone has increased by 31.2% in 2014. In 2015, millennials became the largest demographic in the workforce. More than one-third of millennials are independent.

Additionally, online service platforms provide opportunities for independent talent to connect with businesses. More companies are leveraging on temporary expertise rather than a permanent workforce.

Before you quit your job and run out into the world with your savings account, freelancing also has its disadvantages. While you may be your own boss with greater independence, flexible hours and the ability to pick jobs that you prefer, setbacks include an unpredictable income and little to no employer (and not to forget employment) benefits depending on your job.

From an employer’s perspective, however, freelancers can not only work on-demand when needed, but businesses can pick and choose when they need ready talent with specific skills.

Is this rising gig economy really the way to go from 2017 onward? We will let these freelancers and an employer answer that for us…

Nina Ng, freelance graphic designer

After spending six years in an advertising agency, I began to tire for various reasons. Design is passion-driven and I had lost that passion. To stay on wouldn’t have been fair to myself or my workplace, so I planned a break for myself and took the plunge.

At the time, I didn’t know what was coming at me. I knew I needed to renew my drive. Shortly after, several people started coming to me, friends started pointing opportunities my way, and before I knew it, I was freelancing! It was easy for me to start freelancing
to

Freelancing depends on the individual. Some individuals are very passionate about building their careers and climbing the corporate ladder. For people like these, a steady job with a steady source of income makes it easier for them to focus on achieving their corporate goals.

Darshana, independent communications consultant

I think employers should practise both the gig economy and traditional way of hiring. The current workforce sees value in questioning the purpose and contribution of their work; some even take it as far to ensure their life’s work adds significant meaning to the society and communities they live in.

Some upsides to the gig economy is access to talent across borders, and the ability to encourage a wider platform of knowledge and learning. Having standard contract periods for a year can benefit many in the long run, especially with positions that do not require long term commitments.

The flipside is of course, the issue of accountability and continuity. However, many business models nowadays already have mechanisms in place to address these.

Long-term hiring makes sense for senior positions especially. Traditional hiring will give the stability needed when looking at senior management positions within an organisation.

I can’t say one is better than the other, but in today’s world, a good balance of both will help organisations and employees alike in the long run.

Freelancing depends on the individual. Some individuals are very passionate about building their careers and climbing the corporate ladder. For people like these, a steady job with a steady source of income makes it easier for them to focus on achieving their corporate goals.

Then there are people like me, who do not really feel like they want to spend their 20s and 30s building an empire or climbing the ladder. The yearning to have freedom, the need to explore and create something from scratch directly related to work that I love was a big push factor to go solo.

It gave a lot of freedom and time to breathe, and at the same time was a powerful teacher in discipline, hard work, strategy, business and communication skills but most importantly, it teaches you how to accept failure with grace, and persevere.

At that point in my life, it was the best choice made. If not for that chapter, I wouldn’t be the person I am today. Today, my choice would be to take on contract jobs that last no longer than a year. Given a chance, I would want to go back to freelancing at some point in the future.

Y.S. Ting, freelance photographer

Some companies do not use certain services as often, (i.e. photography etc). So, hiring a photographer on a permanent basis is just a waste of money.

From the photography perspective, you get to hire different people with different skill sets. Certain photographers are better than others in different categories. You can hire someone who is good at everything but it will not be cheap on a permanent basis.

A challenge employers may face in hiring external staff is finding a replacement. As freelancers, there are plenty of companies looking to book you for projects. So, if the particular person is booked, it may be difficult to find someone else whose work you can trust. Depending on how often a service is needed, hiring the traditional way and hiring temporarily is subjective. For example, if you are looking for a full-time photographer, a good one will not be cheap and a cheap one may not be as good.

When a photographer who charges a lower rate improves and demands for a higher payment and the company is unwilling to pay, then there’s a possibility that you will have a high turnover rate.

When I started freelancing because I felt like I was overworked to the point that my health was deteriorating, I felt underpaid for the amount of work I did. As a freelancer, I have more time to myself, more time to do my own projects, and it pays fairly well. The more work I do, the more I get paid, so I have no reasons to complain.

When is not working, she styles bridal hair on the weekends. Will the gig economy be our future? Share your thoughts with her!
Winning over the Next Generation Workforce

How to Empower Millennials at your Workplace

1. Communicate Impact Appropriately
Many organisations make very strong attempts to fit in with the demands of the future workforce that they tend to tackle the “form” rather than the “substance”. So, they end up revising visions and mission statements to portray messages of helping to develop a better world and environment for the population. As such, most of those initiatives are only at face value, only to reflect the seemingly good image of the organisation.

The impacts of these initiatives should be purposeful, sustainable, effective and reasonable. Employers should avoid harping on the statements without executing the steps needed to move the needle towards making necessary changes. Employers need to have a good sense of direction that the work is framed to add meaning.

Millennials find more satisfaction in doing the work in a company where transparency is practised in the utilisation of the technology, resources and talent. They also want to create shared value, make positive social and environmental changes, and increase opportunities for the disadvantaged segments in society.

2. Initiate Upskilling
Initiate upskilling opportunities on mentorship, skill acquisitions and co-leadership. We understand that the stereotypes being thrown at millennials include them being lazy, feeling entitled and demand for fast results, which are not on par with the effort invested in. However, contrary to these beliefs, millennials are likely to work harder and put in more effort if the employers are also willing to invest in their development. These young talents really appreciate the opportunity to learn from someone with expertise, and they want that on-the-ground experience to happen immediately.

We all have heard of mentorship or co-leadership. In the Asian context, it is only in recent years that it started gaining popularity. With the existence of mentorship in organisations, millennials would feel like their work and effort are being appreciated, constructively guided. When this happened, they are more likely to deliver their best knowing that if they do it right, the effort will be recognised and utilised for greater good. And if it is incorrect, someone would care enough to correct them and show the right way to deliver – hence improving their performance.

3. Invest in Learning and Development
The human resource (HR) department needs to play a key role rather than confining them to administrative work – roles that are more strategic and developmental.

Let’s face it – a large majority of millennials seem to stay in the same job and organisation for an average of three years before jumping to other roles. In addition to this, millennials are not the only ones that are job hopping – it’s the same of the generations preceding them too, possibly due to the rapid advancement in technology and the emergence of industry loyalty.

So, how would HR strategise on the investment especially in terms of skills learning and development for talents who are bound to leave in three years? HR should focus on designing training programmes focusing on skills development, while helping their employees prepare their next career development in say, three, five or 10 years.

By making such investments, it will create a sense of appreciation among the millennials that the employers are interested not only on their work performance but also their personal goals.

This will motivate them to find their work meaningful, knowing that the organisation pays attention to their progression and personal aspirations. In conclusion, it is important to note that meaning-making is an act of self-expression, a chance for employees to reveal who they are in what they do. It is found in relationships between people, not ideas.

By Awatif Ghapar
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I f you’re like me, you remember all your bosses. A couple were awful. Most were fairly good. But only one of mine was, in the best possible way, truly unforgettable. Memorable bosses possess qualities that may not show up on paper but always show up where it matters most—in the minds and hearts of the people they lead.

Here are some of the qualities of truly unforgettable bosses:

1. **THEY BELIEVE THE UNBELIEVABLE**
   - Most people try to achieve the achievable; that’s why most goals and targets are incremental rather than incredible. Memorable bosses expect more—from themselves and from others. Then they show you how to get there. And they bring you along for what turns out to be an unbelievable ride.

2. **THEY SEE OPPORTUNITY IN INSTABILITY AND UNCERTAINTY**
   - Unexpected problems, unforeseen roadblocks, major crises—most bosses take down the sails, batten the hatches, and hope to wait out the storm. A few see a crisis as an opportunity. They know it’s extremely difficult to make major changes, even necessary ones, when things are going relatively smoothly.
   - They know reorganising an entire sales team is accepted more easily when a major competitor goes under. They know creating new sales channels is a lot easier when the flow of supplies and components gets disrupted.
   - Memorable bosses see instability and uncertainty not as a barrier but as an enabler. They reorganise, reshape, and reengineer to reassure, motivate, and inspire and in the process, make the organisation much stronger.

3. **THEY WEAR THEIR EMOTIONS ON THEIR SLEEVES**
   - Good bosses are professional. Memorable bosses are highly professional and yet also openly human. They show sincere excitement when things go well. They show sincere appreciation for hard work and extra effort and sincere disappointment not in others, but in themselves. They celebrate, empathise and worry. Sometimes they even get frustrated or angry.
   - In short, they’re human. And, unlike many bosses, they act as if they know it. Professionalism is admirable. Professionalism with a healthy blend of humanity is inspiring.

4. **THEY AREN’T AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP**
   - Good bosses use their knowledge and experience to make decisions. After all, a key trait all great leaders possess is decisiveness. Unforgettable bosses don’t think they know everything. They know what they know, they don’t know what you know. So they ask.
   - While that shows vulnerability, it also shows respect for other people’s opinions and a willingness to listen—which are also qualities of a great leader.

5. **THEY PROTECT OTHERS FROM THE BUS**
   - Terrible bosses throw their employees under the bus. Good bosses will never resort to such actions. Memorable bosses see the bus coming and pull their employees out of the way, often without the employees knowing until much, much later, if ever, because memorable bosses never try to take credit. And if they can’t, they take the hit. (And later speak privately to the employee in question.)

6. **THEY’VE BEEN THERE, DONE THAT, AND STILL DO THAT**
   - Dues aren’t paid, past tense. Dues get paid each and every day. The true measure of value is the tangible contribution we make daily. That’s why, no matter what they may have accomplished in the past, memorable bosses are never too good to roll up their sleeves, get dirty, and do the “grunt” work.
   - No job is ever too menial, no task ever too unskilled or boring. Memorable bosses never feel entitled, which means no one feels entitled to anything but the fruits of their labour.

7. **THEY LEAD BY PERMISSION, NOT AUTHORITY**
   - Every boss has a title. That title gives them the right to direct others, to make decisions, organise, instruct and discipline.
   - Memorable bosses lead because their employees want them to lead. Their employees are motivated and inspired by the person, not the title. Through their words and actions, they cause employees to feel they work with, not for, a boss. Many bosses don’t even recognise there’s a difference, but memorable bosses do.

8. **THEY EMBRACE A LARGER PURPOSE**
   - A good boss works to achieve company goals. A memorable boss also works to achieve company goals—and achieves more than other bosses—but also works to serve a larger purpose: to advance the careers of employees, to rescue struggling employees, to instill a sense of pride and self-worth in others.
   - They aren’t just remembered for nuts-and-bolts achievements but for helping others on a personal and individual level. Memorable bosses embrace a larger purpose, because they know business is always personal.

9. **THEY TAKE REAL, NOT FAKE RISKS**
   - Many bosses, like many people, try to stand out in some superficial way. Maybe through their clothes, interests, or a public display of support for a popular initiative. They do stand out, but they stand out for reasons of sizzle, not steak.
   - Memorable bosses stand out because they are willing to take an unpopular stand, or an unpopular step, accept the discomfort of ignoring the status quo, and risk sailing uncharted waters.
   - They take real risks not for the sake of risk but for the sake of the reward they believe possible. And by their example they inspire others to take risks to achieve what they believe is possible.
   - In short, memorable bosses inspire others to achieve their dreams: by words, by actions, and, most importantly, by example.
EVERYTHING YOU ‘KNOW’ ABOUT MILLENNIALS IS WRONG

By TRAVIS BRADBERRY
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As every new generation enters the workforce, it’s amazing how quickly they’re mislabeled with “attributes” that are common to young people. These labels tend to stick, and they become increasingly inaccurate as the generation ages (assuming they were even accurate to begin with).

Nowhere is this more evident than with millennials. There’s a lot of talk about this generation, who will make up a big percentage of the workforce within the next few years.

That’s why it’s so great to see that IBM has decided it’s time we quit making assumptions. IBM conducted a global study that aimed to separate fact from fiction so that we can learn what millennials are really all about.

Here’s what they found:

MYTH No. 1: MILLENNIALS HAVE UNREALISTIC CAREER GOALS.

FACT: As it turns out, millennials are just like everyone else in the workplace. They’re after financial and job security, first and foremost. And who can blame them? That’s a big part of why we work in the first place. So, don’t expect your younger workers to make unrealistic requests of you and your company.

MYTH No. 2: MILLENNIALS EXPECT Endless praise because they were raised in a culture of ‘everyone gets a trophy’

FACT: Not only are millennials not after endless praise from their manager, their No. 1 preference in a boss is the opposite of ‘everyone gets a trophy’. They’re after financial and job security, first and foremost. And who can blame them? That’s a big part of why they work in the first place. So, don’t expect your younger workers to make unrealistic requests of you and your company.

MYTH No. 3: MILLENNIALS ARE SO ADDICTED TO TECHNOLOGY THAT THEY LACK BOUNDARIES BETWEEN THEIR WORK AND PRIVATE LIVES.

FACT: The opposite is true. Millennials are actually much less likely to blur the boundaries between their work and private lives because they’ve been raised with technology. They’ve been bred on nuances that many older workers fail to understand. In fact, millennials are four times more likely than boomers to keep their work and personal lives separate when it comes to technology. Looks like it’s the old dogs that are having trouble learning new tricks.

MYTH No. 4: MILLENNIALS ARE AFRAID TO MAKE DECISIONS FOR THEMSELVES.

FACT: Millennials are no more likely than Generation X to seek group consensus when making decisions. They simply aren’t as timid about making decisions as everyone thinks they are.

And, contrary to the mistaken assumption that millennials have a tendency to buck authority, more than 50% of them trust their company’s leadership to make decisions that are sound (a figure that’s in line with boomers and Generation X).

MYTH No. 5: MILLENNIALS WILL QUIT A JOB THAT DOESN’T FULFILL THEIR PASSIONS.

FACT: When it comes to changing jobs, millennials are just like everybody else. The number one reason they leave is a job that doesn’t fulfill their passions. And, contrary to the mistaken assumption that millennials have a tendency to buck authority, more than 50% of them trust their company’s leadership to make decisions that are sound (a figure that’s in line with boomers and Generation X).

There’s a simple way to ensure that this never happens to you. Talk to your millennials, and find out what they want because it’s likely a far cry from what you’d expect. Do you agree with the IBM study? What has your experience been like working with and managing millennials? Please share your thoughts and experiences with us.

Are you training your employees for your competitors?

Unless you intentionally design your culture, training for competencies alone might just be equipping your employees to leave you!

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