

Bridging the Gap with Next Generation Leaders

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PURPOSE: Throughout the past sixteen years as an executive leadership coach working with young talent and the executives that manage them, I have seen a disconnect. That disconnect spans from what young people want in their careers to what their superiors need in next generation leadership. Seasoned professionals who currently are 53 years and older will be retiring in large numbers from the workforce over the next decade, leaving vacancies in leadership roles. My experience has shown me that young talent is not being developed to keep up with the current and future demand. In addition, there is high turn-over with young talent, creating gaps in service and heavy use of resources to recruit, hire and train new employees. The survey I conducted captures the current needs and desires of both next generation leaders and those who manage them, pointing to gaps and potential solutions for building up the needed talent pool.

SURVEY METHOD: Two surveys were conducted through Survey Monkey. The first survey included a series of questions and was targeted to those who manage next generation leaders, yielding 63 respondents. All five questions were open-ended questions. The second survey included a series of questions and was targeted to next generation leaders aged 22-35, yielding 74 respondents. Three questions were open-ended and two were multiple choice allowing for unlimited responses. All open-ended questions from both surveys were categorized into themes as seen in the following results.

SUMMARY: The survey clearly indicates where there is disconnect and where there is alignment in what young talent wants in a career and what those who manage them want in the leadership pipeline. The number one quality managers are seeking in next generation talent is communication and people skills, yet the greatest deficit that managers perceive are the qualities of being other-regarding and communication skills. The primary career drivers of

young talent are to make an impact and have meaning in their work, but those do not seem to be generating the patience and motivation being sought by those who manage them. They bring to the table, technology and innovation skills, both of which are valued and sought out by their superiors. Those that manage next generation leaders also are seeking replacements for themselves, but are finding key skills lacking that would make the young talent strong leaders. This points to the ripe opportunity to close the gaps through leadership development, coaching, and team optimization to create the needed talent to fill the future leadership roles being vacated by aging senior leaders. Following are the results from the two surveys conducted.

SURVEY RESULTS

Managers of Next Generation Leaders

Q1 What qualities are you seeking in next generation leaders aged 22-35?

Communication & People Skills	29%	18
Critical Thinking	22%	14
Desire to Learn & Improve	22%	14
Initiative & Self-Starter	22%	14
Drive & Motivation	21%	13
Honesty & Integrity & Ethical	17%	11
Innovative, Creative & Curious	17%	11

*Percentage and number out of 63 respondents

Although **communication and people skills** are the most desirable traits in young talent, a gap exists. Being other-regarding such as empathy, consideration and thoughtfulness, along with communication skills are the two areas of most lack. Both of these skills can be cultivated through coaching and mentorship. A 360 Feedback assessment is often an effective tool to gauge both qualities. Emotional Intelligence training can be useful in building awareness and developing skills.

Critical thinking relates to two of the unique skills that this generation offers, they are **innovative** and problem-solvers. To continue to develop these capabilities, providing more opportunities to engage in creative thinking to design new solutions is key. This intersects with the **desire to learn and improve**, by fostering an environment for learning and feedback and lays out a path for curiosity.

Q2 Generally speaking, what do you see as the unique skills and qualities that this age group possesses?

Technology Savvy	46%	29
Innovative	16%	10
Problem Solving Capability	11%	7
Value Diversity	11%	7

*Percentage and number out of 63 respondents

This begs the question, “How can we best utilize their talents?” Affording the chance to showcase their **technological** skills, offer up their **innovative** ideas, and take a fresh approach to **solving problems** will leave them feeling they are contributing and making impact. This generation places great **value on diversity**, which can be an asset in strengthening an organization from a talent pool perspective and understanding customers and a global context.

Q3 What are the skills and qualities lacking in this age group that would allow them to be strong leaders?

Other-Regarding	29%	18
Communication Skills	22%	14
Patience	22%	14
Work Ethic	19%	12
Realistic Expectations	13%	8
Depth of Knowledge	13%	8

*Percentage and number out of 63 respondents

Each skill and quality can be trained and enhanced in a collaborative team environment. Little **consideration** of others, being unrealistic and lack of **depth of knowledge** limit career growth. A concerted effort to model effective **communication** from the top down, demonstrate appropriate **work ethic**, pass on **institutional knowledge**, mentor young talent, and build a culture of consideration can overcome these obstacles.

Q4 How could well qualified next generation leaders be an asset to your organization?

Innovation	29%	18
Succession Planning	19%	12
Cutting Edge Use of Technology	16%	10
Role Model to Other Young Talent	13%	8

*Percentage and number out of 63 respondents

These can be incorporated into the hiring process, embedded in the culture of an organization, part of the organizational goals and vision, prominent in the communication style, reflected in individual achievement goals, and the basis for performance measurement.

Q5 Respondent Ages

AGE	# OF RESPONSES
25-35	12
36-45	14
46-55	15
56+	22
TOTAL	63

SURVEY RESULTS

Next Generation Leaders: 22-35 Year Olds

Q1 What are you seeking from your career?

Ability to Make an Impact	30%	22
Finding Meaning in Work	30%	22
Personal Development	28%	21
Sense of Fulfillment	28%	21
Income Potential	27%	20

*Percentage and number out of 74 respondents

The way next gen leaders feel about their work and how they are developing are their primary drivers. Incorporating a sense of purpose into the work environment by supervisors creates alignment between extending effort and the impact it makes. Young people want to know: What are we accomplishing and why? How am I impacting my colleagues, clients, community? This can be achieved by attaching individual goals to the overall picture of what the organization is trying to accomplish and why.

Q2 What ways do you like to be rewarded for good work?

Increased salary or hourly pay	85.3%
Recognition	64.0%
Increased job responsibility	62.7%
Flexible work schedule	60.0%
Bonus Pay	57.3%
Professional development opportunities	46.7%
Bigger title	37.3%
Ability to work from home	36.0%
Travel	32.0%
Extra time off	26.7%
Intrinsic rewards	13.3%
Gifts	4.0%

*Percentage of 74 respondents

Although **increased pay** emerged as the number one method this group likes to be incentivized, they equally desire from their job a sense of **creating impact, doing meaningful work, the ability to engage in personal development** and having a **sense of fulfillment**. The ways they most desire to be rewarded relate to moving up, but the intrinsic rewards are what motivates them.

Q3 How do you define leadership?

Guide Organization & People	36%	27
Develop Others	26%	19
Motivate	26%	19
Drive Results	26%	19
Inspire	22%	16
Be a Role Model	20%	15

*Percentage and number out of 74 respondents

What we admire in others is what we aspire to be. This is who they want to be as leaders and can be taught the skills to get there.

Q4 What are the best methods for you to develop leadership skills?

Hands on leadership experiences	78.7%
Work with a mentor	76.0%
Observe and Model others' leadership skills	74.7%
Take a workshop or class	38.7%
Trial and Error: "Sink or Swim"	29.3%
Group project	26.7%
Creative Exercises	24.0%
Read a book	21.3%
Hire a coach	13.3%
Discussion group	10.7%
Step-by-Step Instructions	8.0%

*Percentage of 74 respondents

This is a high-touch group. They want to be involved, experiencing and learning through participating. They want to be given opportunities to lead, as well as the professional development and personal mentorship to learn to lead well.

Q5 Respondent Ages

*Every age represented in survey pool from ages 22-35

AGE	# OF RESPONSES
22-25	19
26-30	28
31-35	24
36-40	3
TOTAL	74

CONCLUSION

Survey results indicate that there is both alignment and disconnect in what is desired and what is available in the young talent pool as notated in the charts below.

Alignment exists in a number of areas. The need for critical thinking matches the unique problem-solving abilities. Next Gen Leaders want and are incentivized through personal and professional development in their careers. One way they define leadership is as the capability to develop others, so they value development for themselves and see it as a leadership responsibility. Managers can capitalize on the technology and innovation skills that the next generation brings as both a unique skill and as asset to their organization. Being a role model is another way leadership is defined and is recognized as a potential asset of Next Generation Leaders.

MANAGERS want from Next Gen	MANAGERS view as Unique Skills	MANAGERS see as Assets	NEXT GEN want from Career	NEXT GEN defines Leadership	ALIGNMENT
Critical Thinking	Problem Solving Capability				Problem solving is seen as a unique skill of Next Gen and also a skill sought by managers.
Desire to Learn & Improve			Personal & Professional Development	Develop Others	Next Gen want to continue to develop themselves and others, while their managers are seeking the desire for improvement in their young talent.
Innovative, Creative & Curious	Innovative	Innovation			Innovation skills are sought by managers, being offered by Next Gen and seen as an asset as they move into leadership.
	Technology Savvy	Cutting Edge Use of Technology			Tech savvy is a unique skill and also is viewed as a way Next Gen can contribute.
		Role Model to Others		Be a Role Model	Next Gen feel that leaders should be role models, while their managers feel their asset is as a role models to their peers.

Disconnect is seen in the need to develop the necessary people and communication skills to make them effective as leaders, particularly because lack of these skills makes it difficult to create impact and guide an organization and its people. Drive, motivation and the competency for taking initiative are at a disconnect with lack of work ethic. Little patience in growing in their professions and unrealistic career expectations fuel discontent and likely high turn-over.

MANAGERS want from Next Gen	MANAGERS see as Lacking	NEXT GEN want from Career	NEXT GEN defines Leadership	DISCONNECT
Communication	Communication Skills			Strong communication skills are needed and are lacking in Next Gen.
People Skills	Other-Regarding	Ability to Make an Impact	Guide Organization & People	Managers seek those with people skills. Next Gen want to be able to make an impact and view leaders as a guide of people. They are lacking the necessary people skills to do so.
Initiative & Self-Starter	Work Ethic			Lack of work ethic limits the ability to take initiative.
Drive	Work Ethic		Drive Results	Drive is also low due to a lack of strong work ethic.
Motivation	Work Ethic		Motivate	The ability to motivate is impacted by lack of work ethic.

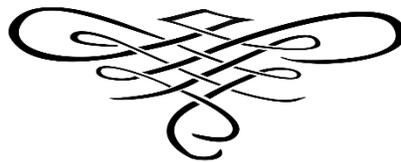
What does it take to get there?

It would be ideal for young talent to travel along the same path of paying their dues that their senior leaders took in developing their careers. The reality is that they leave their jobs when their career satisfiers are not being met. The 2016 Deloitte Millennial Survey¹ titled “Winning over the next generation of leaders,” indicates that by 2020 66% of those in the 22-35 year old age bracket plan to leave their current employment. The impact of low employment duration is immense.² The costs associated with the recruitment, hiring and on-boarding of new employees ranges from thousands of dollars per hire to 1.5 to 2 times their salary. Other considerations are loss of institutional knowledge, loss of productivity while filling a role, ramp up time to peak productivity, the impact on culture and the engagement of others who are affected by turn-over. The answer is to invest in the young talent to build the Next Generation Leadership so that there is alignment with what they are seeking in their careers and what managers need in leaders who will succeed them. The three areas that will accomplish this are:

Leadership development through hands-on experiences provides an opportunity to understand oneself better and how to build followership. Consideration of others, communication skills, and critical thinking trained, along with professional etiquette leads to stronger work ethic. Since this age group highly values personal and professional development, this produces a greater feeling of connectedness and commitment in the workplace.

Coaching to achieve the optimal skillset addresses the current skill and talent gaps on an individual basis. Assessments that gauge personality, strengths and emotional intelligence enhance self-understanding and provide context for development areas. Goals tied to the mission and vision of the organization create a stronger sense of purpose and meaning to any contribution. Coaching is a powerful way to create change to perspective and behavior.

Team optimization supplies a forum for integration. Shared values and practices are explored and adopted, as well as language for individual and group development. Team presents a setting for utilizing the distinctive technology, innovation and problem-solving skills young talent offer. Creating realistic expectations for income potential, upward trajectory and appropriate financial rewards in the team setting level-sets the outlook. Recognition programs based on mastery of skills and increased knowledge are designed to incentivize. Through mentorship, leadership skills are observed and fostered. This also affords the chance to pass on institutional knowledge. Young talent feel invested in, increasing the prospect of retaining them.



MY CREDENTIALS: As a board certified coach, I specialize in executive leadership coaching. In 2005, I became a certified coach with best-selling author Dr. Martha Beck. Through the International Coach Federation, I am certified as a professional certified coach and earned certificates for training through the American Society for Training and Development. My Bachelor's Degree is in Communications from the University of Michigan. I have taught and coached students in the MBA and Undergraduate programs at the University of Arizona Eller College of Management. My client list is comprised of Fortune 500 companies, educational institutions, for profit and non-profit businesses and leadership organizations. I am a graduate, former Board Member and Executive Director, and Past President of Greater Tucson Leadership, as well as the 2005 recipient of the Brigadier General Ronald L. Kurth Merit Award for Leadership. www.SuzanneMcFarlin.com

¹ 2016 Deloitte Millennial Survey: <https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/gx-millennials-one-foot-out-the-door.html>

² How much does employee turnover really cost? http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/how-much-does-employee-turnover-really-cost_us_587fbaf9e4b0474ad4874fb7

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