

## **Career Rx**

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### **Transitioning from Managing to Leading**

When you are asked to manage a team, how do you approach this request? Let's begin with the definitions of the root word, *manage* which means to control, while *lead* means to take on a journey. Which style is more natural to you? Do you want to control staff or projects or motivate and inspire people to go beyond what is expected? According to the book, *Culture.com*, a leader strives to produce flexibility, commitment and organizational identity which allows for more agility in uncertain times.

In today's workforce, there are many factors impacting business. E-business or the .com culture, global workforce leading to multicultural interaction, and inter-generational work styles are all impacting one's approach in navigating as a leader. Attitudes about work and life are the result of different values based on events and experiences that have shaped each individual's world view. These differences affect recruitment, development, management and communications in dealing with employees. Organizing teams, dealing with change and maximizing productivity depend on understanding personal differences.

Generational and intercultural differences influence but do not determine adult interactions. Many experienced professionals have grown up with traditional managers. To bring some understanding on the generational perspective, the labels—Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Xers and Millennials, are not meant to stereotype but rather help foster an understanding of some group members. Studying cultural differences are a similar issue. These categorizations may help individuals invested in their way of thinking see others with a wider frame of reference. The more important thing to remember is that all people are unique and there is great diversity within each generation. The ultimate goal is to find each person's individual potential and help them realize what they can be. Traditionalists tend to follow the "chain of command" while Baby Boomers embrace the "change of command." Mix these styles with Xers who are "self command" driven and Millennials who say "don't command, but collaborate" and it may seem like everyone at the table wants a different meal.

Most organizations speak to diversity without creating the environments to encourage open communication and learning. The need to communicate and respect one another's perspective and learn from each other is critical in preventing these generational and multicultural styles from colliding. One way to gain cooperation is to build a "learning community" within your team. The desire to learn crosses generational and multicultural differences and makes it possible to share values that each person can bring to their overall group. A learning community can be as simple as getting staff together for a lunch discussion, creating a book group discussion or presenting potential business challenges and letting the team engage in brainstorming potential solutions. The solutions can be presented with awards given for selective categories such as most creative or innovative or cost effective. It can be very instrumental in increasing awareness, leveraging members' knowledge and creating an understanding of work styles, and enhancing the overall team's goals.

There are many ways to motivate teams. Think about how you can partner staff to cross pollinate knowledge and gain mutual understanding. These partnerships can become informal cross mentoring opportunities. Introducing a mentoring program can be very powerful for team member development. The mentors can be within the company or some companies join programs so mentors can be from external companies that wish to collaborate.

Today's leaders need to be aware of generational and multicultural styles in the workplace. As the global workforce continues to evolve, creating communities where members can embrace their differences and work together as a collegial team is important. Personal relationships are the key to this goal, but keep in mind that each group has a different definition or value proposition of a relationship.

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