

If You Think Leading Today is Tough...

Wait 'til Tomorrow!

Three generations. Global cultures. Diverse values. Knitting them together for a common goal? Leadership today is tough.

What if you had to knit together four generations of even more multi-cultural, more diverse values? That's what our next generation of leaders has to look forward to.

Millennial values are no more permanent than those of any previous generation, although no one knows yet what the values of the Millennial+1 generation will be. The lifespan of a generation's values is getting shorter, meaning more generations of values will be operating simultaneously. Meanwhile, the differences in values seems to be getting greater.

There's nothing new about each generation bringing their own set of values to the table. That's been going on since Adam and Eve. If I don't like the values of the generations that follow me, I need to recognize that they are the product of my generation's leadership. If they seem to be lacking in some way, it's because our generation didn't recognize the long-term impact of our choices.

Every generation seeks to rectify the short-comings they see in previous generations. That's as it should be. With good inter-generational relationships, they can build on previous strengths while trying new approaches to address the weaknesses. Ignore past lessons and you're doomed to repeat them. Ignore the future and you won't have one.

We have a responsibility to communicate our values to the next generation, but they will have to be reshaped, implemented differently, and integrated with new values. Our solutions created the next generation of problems — they won't solve them.



Here are a few tips on preparing to lead into the diverse, undefined future:

- 1. Know your own values.** Values drive behaviors. Don't say you value family time if your calendar tells me otherwise. It's ok to have some "wanna-be" values that you're intentionally working on. But be honest with yourself about what's really important. Then make choices that are consistent with those values.
- 2. Be a student of your followers' values.** Learn to recognize, respect, and connect with the values of your followers, whatever those values might be. Observe their behaviors and work backwards from there to identify their values. Your values won't align exactly with theirs, but build on the similarities and respect the differences. The synergy of aligned values creates strength, and the diversity of differing values creates new opportunity. If you can't advance your mission with their values, you have the wrong followers.
- 3. Care about your followers' growth.** Even if your star employees are effectively advancing your goals, you're failing them as a leader if you're not helping them reach their full potential *according to their values*. And they probably won't be following you for long.

Bottom line: Leading by recognizing and building on values equips you to lead people with diverse values. Developing these skills will prepare you to lead the next generation, whatever their values prove to be.

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