



MILLENNIALS  
WHO  
**MANAGE**

HOW TO OVERCOME WORKPLACE PERCEPTIONS  
AND BECOME A GREAT LEADER

CHIP ESPINOZA  

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JOEL SCHWARZBART

## Praise for *Millennials Who Manage*

“The one thing all Millennial managers lack is experience. They must combat that by being extremely sharp in every other arena. *Millennials Who Manage* provides critical insight and perspective that allows leaders to get into the mindset of those they are leading. There is a plethora of great books on management and leadership; however, most of them do not speak directly to Millennials. This book provided me with much needed insight, and it is a tool that I will continue coming back to over and over again.”

—**Rob Knutsen**, CEO, J. Derek Lewis & Associates

“After working with Chip for half a decade on the topic of Millennials in the workforce, he never fails to deliver new insights, useful coaching, and overall value to everyone who is participating in the multigenerational workforce. He has been able to tailor the message to each segment in a respectful way right when they need it, and *Millennials Who Manage* is a great addition—again—right when they need it. Most workers don’t wake up in the morning looking for ways to derail their career, but in fact they do just that. The multigenerational workforce is wrought with challenges, and Chip’s expertise on the topic is unmatched in navigating the workplace of the present and the future.”

—**Ron Weber**, Director of Service Delivery, ShiftGig

“You often hear managers bemoan their inability to understand or effectively manage their millennial staff, and many books have been written about how to understand Millennials. What has been missing in this space is a book that speaks to the Millennials themselves. As Millennials, we have the power to change the negative perceptions of our generation and to collaborate with coworkers across generations, and this book coaches Millennials to do just that. Career paths are becoming increasingly difficult to navigate and *Millennials Who Manage* is a practical guide for realizing your potential and avoiding pitfalls in the workplace while staying true to yourself. The book challenges Millennials not only to strive to be understood, but to consider that the perceptions of other generations are valid. This is especially important for those Millennials who find themselves challenged by the task of managing multi-generational teams. *Millennials Who Manage* encourages each of us to examine how our own values and assumptions are affecting our work and our communication style, with an emphasis on finding ways that we can work together. I’d love to see this book on the shelf of every young aspiring manager. I will certainly be utilizing the tools and tactics presented to sharpen and hone my own leadership skills.”

—**Kendra Puryear**, Director of Development, Orange County United Way

“There is no escaping the fact that an ever increasing part of the work force is and will continue to be made up of Millennials both as employees and managers. Understanding what makes them tick and motivated is a must. Chip Espinoza’s work in this field is ahead of the curve, groundbreaking, and should be required reading for anyone who desires to effectively manage in today’s workplace...which is of course everyone!”

—**Jim McInnis**, Founder & CEO, RDR Sales Consulting

“How do we manage in the multi-generational workplace? Over the past 10 or so years, we have begun to enjoy the new expectations (and challenges) as Generation Y has entered the workforce with a bang! Now, as the early Millennials are hitting their 30s and beginning to take more senior management and leadership roles, things are shifting again.

“In this book, Chip Espinoza and Joel Schwarzbart give a thoughtful account on how to prepare oneself to lead and be lead in the four generation office. Packed full of practical advice, this book is a ‘how to’ guide to survive and thrive in our new world.

“If you are 3 years into your work life and about to lead a team of people who grew up loving rock and roll, then make sure this book is on your nightstand. Well written and avoiding the temptation to lapse into constant ‘management speak,’ it’s a compelling read that you will find hard to put down.

“I look forward to my next boss being a Millennial!”

—**Paul Bowles**, Global Resourcing, Thales

“*Millennials Who Manage* is powerful on many levels. I manage people who are 10, 15, 20 years older than me. This book helped me understand why I have been experiencing so many disconnects with them and what I can do about it. The book is really helpful in explaining the perspectives of the different generations and why they cause so much friction in my department. It has practical suggestions for improving interactions across generations. As a director focused on getting stuff done, I really appreciate that.”

—**Mei Shan Tan**, Director of Financial Planning & Analysis, Optum

# **Millennials Who Manage**

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# **Millennials Who Manage**

**How to Overcome Workplace Perceptions  
and Become a Great Leader**

**Chip Espinoza  
Joel Schwarzbart**

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—Chip Espinoza

First, I want to thank the anonymous participants in our surveys. We live in an age of constant bombardment by marketers and researchers, and it is all too tempting to shut out strangers' solicitations for our time. Without the contribution of their thoughts and time, this book could not exist. We gained unique insights from our participants, for which I am deeply grateful.

I also wish to thank my students. Their questions and challenges motivated me to develop better ways to communicate the topics of organizational behavior. Their interest rewarded me for that effort.

I wish to thank my co-author Chip Espinoza. Through the course of this project and others, I have seen him work through many challenging situations with uncommon grace. Chip is an outstanding classroom teacher and trainer, but as a leader who practices what he preaches, he also teaches by example.

Finally, I thank my family, my wife, Ti-lien, and our children, Joshua and Annie, for their patience while I worked on this book. They cheerfully supported me while I took time on weekends and evenings to write.

—Joel Schwarzbart

# About the Authors

**Chip Espinoza**, Ph.D., is the coauthor of *Managing the Millennials: Discover the Core Competencies for Managing Today's Workforce* and *Millennials@Work: The 7 Skills Every Twenty-Something Needs to Overcome Roadblocks and Achieve Greatness at Work*. He is also the Academic Director of the Organizational Psychology program at Concordia University Irvine.

Chip keynotes internationally and across the country on how to create an environment in which Millennials can thrive. Chip is a leading expert on the subject of generational diversity in the workplace. He consults in the civic, corporate, and non-profit sectors.

Chip has authored several articles on the subject of leadership and is the go-to person for news agencies on the topic of integrating younger workers into organizations. He is a content expert for CNN on the subject of generational diversity in the workplace. He has also been featured on Fox News, CBS Radio, and in major publications. Chip was named a Top 15 Global Thought Leader on the Future of Work by the *Economic Times*.

**Joel Schwarzbart**, Ph.D., received his doctorate in Social Science from the University of California at Irvine, where he studied Social Network Analysis. He teaches Organizational Behavior at Cal State University, Fullerton and has been studying the impact of Millennials on the workplace since 2006. Dr. Schwarzbart co-developed the Generational Rapport Inventory to measure strengths in managing across generations.

# 1

## A Priori

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**B**efore you entrust your career to our advice, it is important that we let you know the background for this book and our qualifications for writing it. A student once asked me, “What qualifies you to teach this class?” It is a great question and deserves a reasoned response—and you might want to know the answer since you have plopped down the money to buy our book, invest the time to read it, and contemplate our advice.

We have been studying Millennials since they entered the workforce. Chip’s doctoral dissertation was titled *Millennial Integration: Challenges Millennials Face in the Workplace and What They Can Do About Them*. He published *Managing the Millennials: Discover the Core Competencies for Managing Today’s Workforce* in 2010 and followed it with *Millennials@Work: The 7 Skills Every Twenty-Something (and Their Manager) Needs to Overcome Roadblocks and Achieve Greatness* in 2014. *Millennials Who Manage* combines years of research and experience that will give you insight into how older workers perceive younger workers, competencies that are critical to managing your peers, challenges you face when managing people older than you, and potential roadblocks you may face when trying to advance to the next level.

From the outset, it is important for you to understand that our work is not a conversation *about* Millennials but rather a conversation *with* Millennials. Our mission has been to help create work environments in which Millennials can thrive. We love Millennials! The love affair

started while teaching a course called Management Theory and Practice at the undergraduate level. We noticed a difference between our students in the 1990s and our students in the early 2000s. We noticed several differences, but one that especially stood out was that Millennials entered the classroom with the idea that everything is negotiable; they expected to have a voice with respect to assignments, absences, and even grades. While other faculty members experienced their students' desire to have a voice as off-putting, we recognized that Millennials wanted to succeed and desired to actively participate in the educational process. They wanted—sometimes even demanded—to be engaged. What more could a professor ask for?

It is one thing to notice a shift in student values and behaviors but quite another to commit personal resources and time to studying the phenomenon. The catalyst for committing wholeheartedly to the topic was one of Chip's classes flipping an assignment on him. The course was an elective listed as Emerging Management Theory. The goal of the course was to get students to realize that the subject of management is *sexy*—meaning management is not a static subject. It is incredibly dynamic because of the constant change in people, organizations, and the work environment. Also, management is the study of many different disciplines, including, among others, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. The students were encouraged to identify and write about what they considered an emerging challenge in the workforce and what they would do about it. The example Chip used at the beginning of the semester was what he viewed as the challenge of managing a generationally diverse organization. At the end of the semester, the students inspired (some would say provoked) Chip to actually begin researching and writing on the topic. The unmitigated truth is that his students were the catalyst for the work that led to the creation of this book and the two listed previously, all involving managing a multigenerational workforce.

Our ambition is for the voice of this book to be conversational and an easy read. Admittedly, it is a challenge writing in both the academic

and business worlds. Some see academia as being “out of touch,” while others argue that acting without critical systematic inquiry is “irresponsible.” There can be tremendous value in both, and we see them as interdependent: Good theory informs good practice, and good practice informs good theory. We strive to be true to both worlds.

## **Why Read *Millennials Who Manage*?**

We believe this book will resonate with you because it invites your engagement with the subject—you. People sometimes say that young managers are *blank slates* because they have less experience than older managers. But we don’t visualize you as a *blank slate* on which we are writing. Nor are we concerned with convincing you to adopt our lens. You have a myriad of experiences and ideas that are already shaping your leadership perspective. Perhaps you have only recently hit the management ranks, but you have led in other contexts and also observed good and bad management. Those experiences are what Bruce Avolio refers to as the context of leadership learning—a person’s life stream. He defines the *life stream* as the representation of events you accumulate from birth to the present that shapes how you choose to influence yourself and others. He reasons, “Keeping in mind the concept of one’s life stream helps to keep leadership development in a state of becoming, until all of our streams, so to speak, run dry.”<sup>1</sup> Hopefully, your leadership learning and development will be a lifelong process.

The intent of this book is to contribute to your life stream and ultimately to your effectiveness as a managerial leader. There will be some “how to,” but there will be a lot more “how to be.” Our hope is that while you are reading, you can immediately think of how to integrate your own thinking and person into what we are saying. It is through this process that your self-concept as a leader will become more defined and ultimately shape the framework for developing, organizing, and implementing your leadership skills.



A lot of early leader development literature placed the leader's primary focus on the follower. The objective was to teach the leader how to get the follower to do what she wanted him to do. The challenges of leading in today's world have caused, if not demanded, a shift in how we approach leader development. The primary focus of the leader is now on the self because it is the nature and presence of the leader that most impacts an organization.<sup>2</sup> Technical skills serve as the price of admission to leadership, but leading effectively depends on how well you negotiate the emotional and relational processes of what many refer to as both science and art.

Frances Hesselbein, co-editor of *The Leader of the Future*, says, "The three major challenges CEOs will face [in the 21st century] will have little to do with managing the enterprise's tangible assets and everything to do with monitoring the quality of: leadership, the work force, and relationships."<sup>3</sup> Hesselbein goes on to say, "The leader beyond the millennium will not be the leader who has learned the lessons of *how to do it*....The leader for today and the future will be focused on *how to be*—how to develop quality, character, mind-set, values, principles, and courage."<sup>4</sup>

We are not interested in inspiring you to change the face of management. That is going to happen with or without our help. We are more concerned with helping you develop a perspective that allows for personal change, adaptation, continual learning, and the ability to lead organizations worthy of human habitation. We want to assist you in your efforts to deploy your best self.

## Learning as a Way of Being

One of the advantages younger workers feel they have in the workplace is being teachable. If you master nothing else, master learning. Liz Wiseman says that getting on the *learning curve* is more important than having experience in today's world of information overload and faster-paced work.<sup>5</sup> Aim to be on the learning curve not just through

your professional formative years but your whole life; don't let your life stream go dry. Peter Vaill defines *learning* as the changes a person makes in himself or herself with respect to the *know-how*, *know-what*, and *know-why*.<sup>6</sup> We humbly add *know-how-to-be* to the list.

Organizations are not becoming less complicated. Every day they bring new learning challenges. Vaill explains, "Today's complex, interdependent, and unstable systems require continual imaginative and creative initiatives and responses by those living and working in them."<sup>7</sup> He is known for comparing management to maneuvering whitewater rapids. Here is what he has to say to anyone who wants to get into the management raft:

1. Permanent whitewater conditions are full of surprises.
2. Complex systems tend to produce novel problems.
3. Permanent whitewater conditions feature events that are "messy" and "ill structured."
4. Whitewater events are often costly.
5. Permanent whitewater conditions raise the problem of recurrence.<sup>8</sup>

## Managerial Leadership

You will notice that the full title of this book has both the terms *manage* and *leader* in it. There are clear differences between the roles of management and leadership. Perhaps Bennis and Nanus offer the simplest distinction between the two: "Managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing."<sup>9</sup> Some argue that you manage things and you lead people. Others would go so far as to say that management and leadership are such different functions that one person cannot do them both. The reality of organizational life is that at times, leaders manage and managers lead. Vaill touched on this by suggesting that the idea of a single person being called "the leader" or "the manager" is a myth.<sup>10</sup>

Although there are clear differences between leadership and management, our view is that you will find yourself in both roles. There is a lot of overlap between management and leadership. Vaill handles the convergence of roles with the title *managerial leader*. In a world that requires more with less, it is difficult to think that an organization can afford to separate the two roles. Therefore, we will not be making a distinction or emphasizing the differences between them. In the end, both roles involve getting people to attain certain objectives and goals. Not all managers desire to be great leaders. But isn't that a sad thought? Be different!

## **Task- and Relationship-Oriented Leadership**

One area of overlap between management and leadership is giving attention to both tasks and relationships. Managerial leaders are often faced with the tension between getting things done and caring for the people with whom they work. The two orientations are not mutually exclusive but are often treated as such. Leaders who show little or no concern for their employees are often autocratic and risk demotivating or demoralizing their teams. Leaders overly concerned with everybody getting along may find it difficult to get things done or to hold people accountable for results. Great leaders emphasize both relationships and results. As a Millennial manager, you can expect to face the added complexity of generational dynamics when it comes to relating to and challenging your employees.

## **Stereotypes and Generalizations**

This book contains a lot of generalizations. We realize that not all Millennials, Gen Xers, and Baby Boomers hold the same views or behave exactly as the stereotypes suggest. We also realize that not everyone born in 1979 is an Xer, nor is everyone born in 1980 all Millennial. Nevertheless, we will use the labels throughout the book. First, there are measurable differences anyone in a managerial role will benefit from

understanding. Second, people treat one another according to those stereotypes rather than as individuals. For both reasons, it is therefore necessary to discuss them.

If you read just a few books or articles about Millennials or Xers, you will find a variety of dates used to demarcate the generations. Demographers tend to use the ranges 1946–1964, 1965–1977, and 1978–1999 as the birth years for the Baby Boom, X, and Millennial generations. These ranges correspond to peak, trough, and peak in the histogram of the number of babies born each year in the United States.

We prefer the date ranges 1943–1960, 1961–1979, and 1980–2000 as the birth years for Boom, X, and Millennial. We view generational “personality” as the product of macro social events. The events most impactful in shaping those personalities don’t coincide exactly with the demographically determined dates. (We cover this in more detail in Chapter 6, “Generational Differences: Fact or Fiction?”) Not all individuals are impacted by events in the same way or to the same degree. However, generational (or age cohort) experiences influence one’s view of the world.

### *Overcoming Stereotype Threat*

Historically, the focus of ageism was reserved for those in the twilight of their work life. But let’s pause and look at the effect ageism may be having on the other side of the age spectrum.<sup>11</sup> Today’s scholars are expanding the definition of ageism to “widely held beliefs regarding the characteristics of people in various age categories.”<sup>12</sup> With that in mind, there may be a kind of reverse ageism in which younger workers are impacted by negative stereotypes.

Millennials are an easy group to identify in terms of their appearance and are therefore highly subject to being stereotyped. When a negative stereotype about a group is relevant to performance on a specific task, it is referred to as “stereotype threat.”<sup>13</sup> An example would be “She is too young to handle the Walmart account.” Individuals who are highly

identified with a particular group may experience increased susceptibility to stereotype threat.<sup>14</sup>

Informal expectations can lead to stereotype threat against an individual and a group of individuals. A generation's attitudes, beliefs, and values play a role in the overall social construct. When we look at the formal age structure (i.e., where those who are older are in charge), power resides with older cohorts who share ideals about work attitudes, values, and behaviors. It can be argued that the larger the cohort (or group), the greater the influence over norms and expectations.

We don't want to let the cat out of the bag too early, but when we asked older workers in our survey, "What is the downside of being managed by a Millennial?," the second-most-frequent response was "dealing with their immaturity." In this case, the definition of *maturity* may be a generational construct. For instance, a 60-year-old manager could ride a bike through the office and have people see him as playful and fun—and even cheer him on. A Millennial could do the same thing but be considered immature and inappropriate. It can be incredibly frustrating, but you have to understand what is going on and learn to be proactive and not reactive.

*Immaturity* can mean a multitude of things. For the sake of our conversation, we would like to define it as a lack of self-regulation. Therefore, immaturity is the inability to act in your own long-term best interest or consistent with your deepest values. Self-awareness is critical to self-regulation in that it is the process of identifying, among other things, our values.

Overcoming negative perceptions has more to do with you learning about you than with others changing their opinions of you.

In the next chapter, we will discuss the difficulties of transitioning into management and share more results from our survey.

## Endnotes

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