



## **INTRODUCTION: NOT BETTER, NOT WORSE— JUST DIFFERENT**

*“Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it.”*

—George Orwell

I will never forget the day I came across my first leaderless team. In my days as a Vice President/Director of Talent Acquisition at Leo Burnett, I was in charge of recruiting at all levels, but my main focus was entry-level candidates. I had the pleasure of reading more than 10,000 student resumes and interviewing more than 1,000 collegians. One of the standard interview questions I asked was, “Tell me about a group project you worked on in college.” I used this question when hiring for the account management department because a huge part of the job was working with diverse groups within the company. We wanted to hire people who had the ability to manage projects and lead teams.

I was seeking candidates who said that they took the role of leader within the group. I would then probe them about their ability to work on diverse teams, handle conflict effectively, and drive results for the group. I must have posed this question hundreds of times in my quest to find the best candidates.

I still remember the day it all changed. It was in the spring of 2001, and I was interviewing a student from Princeton. I asked my standard

“group project” question and was immediately stunned by the response. Here’s how it went:

BRAD: Tell me about a group project you worked on recently in college.

CANDIDATE: Well, last semester we did some work on creating an economic model for a fictitious company.

BRAD: What role did you play in the group?

CANDIDATE: What do you mean?

BRAD: How was the group structured, and what was your role?

CANDIDATE: I’m sorry, but I’m confused. Do you mean what part of the project was I responsible for?

BRAD (*annoyed*): No, I mean were you the leader of the group or a team member?

CANDIDATE: We didn’t have a leader.

BRAD (*dumbfounded*): What do you mean you didn’t have a leader? Every group needs to have a leader. How did you get everything done and stay on track?

CANDIDATE: I don’t know, we just sort of all did our part. It wasn’t really a big deal.

BRAD (*thinking this person will never work at our company and moving on to a new line of questioning*): Okay, now, tell me about your weaknesses.

I shared the story with a few other recruiters, and we all had a good laugh about this fascinating candidate who worked on a leaderless team. But here’s the funny thing. Over the next couple of weeks, it happened again—and again. I heard similar answers regarding leaderless groups from sharp candidates again, and again, and again.

At that point, I knew I was experiencing a fundamental shift, and I recognized that this new generation was not going to play by the same rules. This generation was planning to chart a brave, new course. I was witnessing the formation of the next generation of leaders—*Manager 3.0*.

That is our strong belief at JB Training Solutions. In fact, we consider ourselves the great defender of millennials. One of the best decisions I made for the company was to hire a *real, live* millennial—Courtney—my coauthor. Between working with the millennials on my team and

working with thousands of millennials across the country, I know that you're up against some tough preconceptions about your generation. The key problem is that many of your elders *do* assume you're worse—a lot worse. I have conducted over 500 workshops for more than 15,000 senior leaders on the topic of working with millennials. This workshop, *“Dude, What’s My Job?” Managing Millennials in Today’s Workforce*, is primarily comprised of Xers and boomers who are struggling with “the kids” these days. Let me tell you, they are not a happy bunch. Although they leave the course with a sound understanding of your generation, they come into our workshop practically spewing venom about your group:

*“Why do I always have to hold their hand?”*

*“Why are they so entitled?”*

*“Don’t they understand that they have to pay their dues?”*

Those are some of the tamer responses. I’ve also heard:

*“The worst generation ever!”*

*“I. cannot. stand. them.”*

*“Can’t we just get rid of them?”*

I begin by asking the participants what they think of millennials, and I receive the standard responses like, “you mean those skateboard-riding, Mountain-Dew-drinking, Facebook-posting, Google-searching, YouTube-watching slackers?” I knowingly chuckle, and then I read direct quotes from *Time* magazine to bring a little light to the situation.

The article in *Time* states that this generation truly struggles to make decisions and that they “would rather hike in the Himalayas than climb a corporate ladder.” The article goes on to say that when they should be starting a career and a family of their own, “the twenty something crowd is balking at those rights of passage.”

At this point, one of the Xers in the workshop jumps in and says, “You got it, Brad, you understand our pain.”

I read on and share how companies feel like they “must cater to a young workforce that is considered overly sensitive at best, and lazy at worse.”

“That totally describes Emily!” screams a delighted boomer.

There is more. The article continues to describe a generation of whiners that doesn’t want to pay its dues. It really drives it home when I read that this generation has “a reluctance to embrace the dying work ethic of the former generation.”

A warm chuckle circulates through the room as boomers, and Xers rejoice in my recounting of their daily struggles.

I ask if anyone remembers reading that issue of *Time* magazine. A few hands usually go up. I mention that it’s from July, and then I show the cover. The young people on the cover have big bangs, large hoop earrings, and black leather jackets.

It’s July alright. July of 1990! My audience is dumbfounded. Jaws drop to the floor. “But how could it be?” they ask. “That totally describes millennials,” they protest.

Then I break the obvious news that the article was describing many of them—generation X. I tell them that as they get older, they tend to forget what it’s like to be twenty-two or twenty-four and starting a first job or launching a career. This *Time* magazine sting operation really drives the insight home.

I firmly believe that half of the issues that other generations have with millennials is rooted in the fact that they are just *getting old*. Professionals gain experience—and hopefully wisdom—and they forget about how difficult the transition from school to work can be. They also tend to forget that millennials were raised very differently and were brought up in a changed world. Before they learn these insights, older generations just don’t get it. As they discover more about millennials, they have several “aha” and “oohhh” moments.

George Orwell hit the nail on the head when he said, “Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it.” Every generation likes to complain about those who have followed. Traditionalists railed on about hippie boomers. Boomers decried the horrifying generation Xers, and now all have joined forces to lament the sorry state of the millennials. Likewise, my younger brother isn’t as cool as I am. It’s a time honored tradition. I’m sure, like me, you have heard the stories about how your parents trekked five miles to school, uphill **both** ways, in a driving snowstorm—barefoot, no less!

The fact is that every generation loves to complain about those after them and all the advantages they were afforded. There's bound to be a little tension. The real triumph comes when each individual embraces the idea that no generation is better or worse—just different.

Think back to the candidate at Princeton that I interviewed in the spring of 2001. That millennial is now a 32-year-old. Chances are—like you—she's entered the ranks of management and is now leading teams. What is she going to be like? How is she going to manage? How will she show her leadership skills and take her company to the next level? What might she be lacking and where will she be strong? Based on the fact that she is a millennial, how will she (and you) rewrite the rules of management?

You will learn just that.

This book is your essential toolkit for being an effective and inspiring manager. There will be big ideas, small ideas, and everything in between. Groupon, Southwest Airlines, Winston Churchill, your parents, and the Backstreet Boys will all make an appearance at some point, and Sacagawea and another great captain will help show you the way. You will hear extraordinary examples grounded by tangible management strategies that you can put into practice today. There will be reflective exercises, telltale tweets, and some downright hairy ideas. By learning more about each of the generations, you can reach out, bridge the gap, and shatter all of those negative, preconceived notions about millennials. You will gain the insights and skills to bring out the best in each generation, rewrite the rules that aren't working, and forge a path toward a newer and more compelling version of leadership—Manager 3.0.

Let's get into it.