



Australian  
Institute of  
Management

**AIM Insights**

# Beyond Belief: The Management Reality of Generational Thinking



**Key Findings**

Dr Malcolm Johnson FAIM  
General Manager, Professional Development and Research  
Australian Institute of Management

## Copyright 2014

© Australian Institute of Management (AIM Group)  
All rights reserved

*This work is copyright. Except to the extent of uses permitted by the Copyright Act 1968, no person may reproduce or transmit any part of this work by any process without the prior written permission of the AIM Group*

Post  
Phone  
Email

PO Box 200 Spring Hill Qld 4004  
1300 882 895  
[research@aim.com.au](mailto:research@aim.com.au)

# FOREWORD

The Australian Institute of Management (AIM) has put the spotlight on the generation debate and found that many of the claims about Generation Y are simply beyond belief. A veritable industry has been built around the supposed generation clash, enthusiastically offering solutions to the very discontent and disconnection that it creates.

In preparing this Discussion Paper, AIM is saying 'Enough's enough'. The Institute believes that Australian managers are more sophisticated than this. If they acknowledge the nonsense of running a business by the daily star signs then managing a workforce according to generation stereotype is no less problematic.

AIM's vision is "Better Managers and Better Leaders for a Better Society". Insights from this research deliver on this vision by providing clarity and encouragement to adopt a more sophisticated approach to accelerating the development of superb young managers.

## *Beyond Belief: The Management Reality of Generational Thinking:*

- Punctures nine behavioural stereotypes that perpetuate poor management practices
- Identifies nine leadership perspectives to incorporate in management development programs, and
- Highlights five leadership practices young managers find most challenging.



## Providing comments

AIM welcomes comments on this Discussion Paper.

Comments may be emailed to:  
Dr Malcolm Johnson FAIM  
General Manager, Professional Development and Research  
[research@aim.com.au](mailto:research@aim.com.au)  
[www.aim.com.au](http://www.aim.com.au)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Beyond Belief: The Management Reality of Generational Thinking

### Key message

The Australian Institute of Management is concerned that poor management practices arising from the Generation Y stereotype is impacting the development of young managers. Within this context, research by the Institute sought to identify the perspectives and practices that will:

- assist young managers to more effectively manage people of the same age or older; and
- accelerate their development as effective leaders.

Research findings reveal that much of what has appeared in public discourse lacks substance. Those promulgating the 'generational divide' are contributing to the lapse in more sophisticated approaches to management. Rather than focusing on the generation cohort, the development of young managers should instead leverage the qualities and capacities of the individual.

### What this report provides

Most approaches to the generation debate frame their case around how to manage Generation Y; as if something were wrong with them. Here is the heart of the problem.

This research explores a number of practices and perspectives that will assist young managers (and people of all ages) to achieve their true potential. Open minds and intelligent communication are foundational to this.

The first section of the report examines the common stereotypes and reveals a number of insights:

#### Respect

Everyone wants respect. Problems arise when individuals fail to interpret situations in a way that others perceive as being appropriate.

#### Values

Values guide motivations that drive behaviour. Good communication, rather than basing decisions on behavioural reactions, will facilitate greater cohesion in the workplace.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Motivation

Every person is motivated by work/causes/interests that appeal to them. The challenge is to understand how to tap into the motivations around matters that are shared in the work people do.

## Commitment

Commitment has many measures. The legitimacy of hours or attendance at work is being challenged by output and outcomes. The psychological contract between employer and employee should reflect a mutually negotiated agreement based on a candid two-way conversation.

## Experience

Stage in career and life expands an individual's experience but the adhocery of this is often very inefficient. Senior management has a vital role to play in mentoring and structuring developmental roles to accelerate a young manager's acquisition and application of experience.

## Entitlement

Most people are enthusiastic to do their best. In pushing forward, interpreting this behaviour as entitlement may cloud the underlying motivation; simply wanting to excel in the shortest possible time.

## Communication

Senior managers set the standard of communication behaviour that serves as a benchmark for managers with less contextual experience. Candid communication requires respect, skill and courage such that technology should give way to more effective face-to-face interaction.

## Work/life balance

Work/life balance is a matter that can't be abrogated by the individual and should be the result of candid and negotiated

agreement of the standards that are deemed appropriate.

## Retention

Most people achieve personal wellbeing through having a positive impact in the work they do. Maintaining meaning is a function of ongoing skill development to enable people to deliver on their commitment to the purpose and vision of the organisation. When this deteriorates so does the reason to stay.

In approaching the second research question, accelerating young managers' development as effective leaders is both situational and dynamic. Every organisation will have different strategic imperatives for sustaining competitive advantage, reflected in the emphasis to be placed on leadership development. One constant is that, in transitioning to leadership positions, young managers are required to make a progressive change in professional identity, moving from personal performance to seeing success as an outcome of team performance.

The agility and resilience of young managers relies on developing a repertoire of management responses appropriate to emerging situations. Purposeful exposure to developmental experiences, backed by mentoring from senior managers is welcomed by participants to this research.

In shaping the expectations and outcomes of developmental programs, young managers highlighted five leadership practices they found most challenging:

## Career management

Using professional relationships and networks to manage own career.

## Self-awareness

Recognising strengths and weaknesses; seeking corrective feedback.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## **Change management**

Using effective strategies to facilitate change; overcoming resistance to change.

## **Participative management**

Using listening skills and communication to involve others; building consensus.

## **Leading employees**

Broadening direct reports; being patient and fair; setting clear performance expectations.

Development of programs that will accelerate a young manager's effectiveness will exhibit a dynamic tension between evaluating the contextual opportunities that provide depth of experience and the natural impatience of young managers to accelerate their careers. This research confirms the value of customising development to the individual's capacities and capabilities. Leveraging the deep knowledge and wisdom that experienced managers possess through mentoring young managers is a process on which they place high value.

The Australian Institute of Management encourages professional managers to ignore generational stereotypes. Focusing instead on an individual approach will accelerate the true potential of young managers as they develop the perspectives and practices that matter.

# CONTENTS

Foreword.....	3
Providing comments.....	3
Executive summary .....	4
Research focus .....	8
Research process .....	8
Introduction .....	9
RQ1: What perspectives and practices will assist young managers to more effectively manage people who are the same age or older than them? .....	11
Popular perspectives.....	11
Research perspectives .....	11
Observations .....	15
RQ2: What perspectives and practices will accelerate a young manager’s development as an effective leader?.....	17
Observations .....	18
Conclusions.....	20
Bibliography .....	22

# RESEARCH FOCUS



The Australian Institute of Management's focus is to develop "Better Managers and Better Leaders for a Better Society". The Institute is concerned that poor management practices arising from the generation gap stereotype are impacting the development of young managers.

Within this context, AIM wanted to know:

- What perspectives and practices will assist young managers to more effectively manage people who are the same age or older than them, and
- What perspectives and practices will accelerate young managers' development as effective leaders?

## Research process

The insights contained in this Discussion Paper are based on a combination of:

- Depth interviews with 12 Generation Y managers aged between 24 and 33 years from AIM's Young Manager Advisory Board and AIM30
- Research literature published primarily in peer-reviewed tier one journals reporting results from over 315,000 respondents
- Doctoral dissertations
- Generational themes in popular media.

# INTRODUCTION

The efficacy of a young manager is buffeted by many variables, but none more debilitating than the negative effects of generational stereotypes. A veritable industry has built around the generation gap, seeking to offer solutions to the discontent and disconnection that it creates. As these generational narratives were explored, AIM became increasingly concerned that the ready acceptance of comments curated as 'truths' is not supported by research evidence.

The attraction of generation stereotypes is to reduce the complexity of human interactions to more simple terms. The lack of substantive thinking however is causing a range of problems in business. Much like making business decisions based on star signs in the daily newspaper, the profile of 'generational behaviours' is contributing to biased and unhelpful responses to issues that have no place at work or in society more broadly. Little wonder that many people across all age groups are starting to challenge the disrespectful treatment and unintelligent management practices that have emerged.

Research has highlighted that the generations are in fact more similar than they are different. While the following quote is lengthy it is provided in full to underscore the issue:

“ Given the small, sometimes-negligible per cent of variance accounted for by generations in the work attitudes studied, HR professionals, leaders, and managers would be better served by identifying individual differences, including

*age, which might explain the discordance they are witnessing in their workforce ... The conflict that leaders, managers and HR feel within their organisations is real, but attributing the conflict to generational differences may mask the true cause.”*  
(Kowske et al., 2010, p.276-277).

It is human nature for individuals to search for explanation relating to other people's behaviour (Heider, 1958). Specifically, people tend to attribute others' behaviour to internal causes (i.e., there is something wrong with them) while attributing one's own behaviour to external causes (i.e., blaming poor performance on an external event). Further, there is a pervasive tendency to see unique qualities within one's own group while viewing others through stereotypical lenses (Masi Jr, 2010, p.28).

Negative perceptions of people of a different age group have been traced back to the time of Socrates (Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2010). This doesn't make stereotype threat acceptable. The psychological threat of confirming or being reduced to a negative stereotype held about one's group (Steele et al., 2002) is at the very least unhelpful in eliciting productivity from a diverse workforce. In a work environment, stereotype threat results in poorer performance when people attempt difficult tasks in areas in which they are negatively stereotyped (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008). Overt discrimination is not necessary for employees to feel stereotype threat. Simply being aware that they might be evaluated on the basis of

# INTRODUCTION



a generational profile gives rise to stereotype threat (Von Hippel et al., 2011). This frequently leads people to disengage, feel dejected and lower their career aspirations (Davies et al., 2005).

*Beyond Belief: The Management Reality of Generational Thinking* has been written to stimulate more informed discussion in the workplace so that young managers (and people of all ages) can achieve their true potential through more sophisticated and appropriate management practices.

# RQ1: What perspectives and practices will assist young managers to more effectively manage people who are the same age or older than them?

Popular generational literature with its caricatures, exaggerated to engage popular interest, is lacking in scientific rigour (Sackett, 2002). Caricatures also introduce negative stereotypes that are unhelpful in the workplace.

Stereotypes are largely based on the notion that key differences exist in the work values and beliefs of employees from different generations. This premise has contributed to misunderstanding and miscommunication resulting in conflict in the workplace, lower employee productivity, lower employee wellbeing and reduced organisational citizenship behaviours (Wong et al., 2007).

In addressing the research questions, perspectives were examined from a number of sources including popular media, research papers, and depth interviews with Generation Y managers. In examining the substance of the claims and counter-claims, a number of themes emerged from research to assist young managers to more effectively manage people who are the same age or older.

Indeed, there is a body of research that indicates the beliefs about younger generations entering the workforce have remained remarkably stable over the past 40 years (Deal et al., 2010). Furthermore most of the research of employed adults that examines attitudes at work among generations of the same age finds a few small statistical differences, but the differences are modest at best (Gentry et al., 2011; Kowske et al., 2010; Smola & Sutton, 2002).

## Popular perspectives

Based on birth-cohort it has become popular to attribute certain values and behaviours to different generations (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

**Baby Boomers** are perceived to:

- value job security and a stable working environment
- remain loyal and attached to the organisation
- be idealistic, optimistic and driven
- be more diligent on-the-job
- value having a high degree of power in the organisation
- focus on consensus-building
- be excellent mentors

**Generation X** are characterised as:

- cynical, pessimistic and individualistic
- comfortable with change and diversity
- unlikely to display loyalty to the organisation

# RQ1

- more independent and self-sufficient than Baby Boomers
- likely to leave one job and seek out more challenging options, higher salary, or improved benefits
- sceptical and unimpressed with authority
- keen to receive continuous and immediate feedback
- concerned with achieving work-life balance such that personal values and goals are as important as work-related goals

**Generation Ys** (or Millennials) are perceived by others as:

- having technology become a large part of their life
- being comfortable with change
- less reliant on job security
- valuing skill development
- enjoying the challenge of new opportunities
- being driven and demanding in the work environment
- more likely to be optimistic
- displaying a high level of confidence
- enjoying collective action
- highly socialised
- valuing responsibility and having input into decisions and actions
- living highly structured and scheduled lives with many extracurricular activities (Raines,

2002; Weston, 2006)

- being quite family-oriented and open-minded. They tend to overlook differences among people and treat everyone the same, deeply committed to authenticity and truth telling, extremely stressed, and believe to live in a “no-boundaries” world where they make short-term decisions and expect the outcome to be rather grandiose (Leo, 2003; Raines, 2002)
- preferring a fun working environment, non-monetary perks as well as flexible hours (Cole et al., 2002)

Reflecting on your birth cohort, and the ascribed behaviours, can you see yourself evidencing any of these statements? Could the same be true if you read the attributes of another generation? Do you think others are responding to you through the prism of generation stereotype?

Next, what incentive do the more extreme proponents hope to achieve in advocating there is a generation gap? Cutting to the chase, this type of thinking induces a sense of comfort that managerial problems are the result of others’ behaviour and attitudes rather than perhaps the more challenging question that ineffective practices may lie within. Hyperbole that suggests a ‘clash of generations’ serves to heighten the emotional intensity of the debate but reduces clarity of thinking.

Rolf Dobelli (2013, p.14), has highlighted how social proof (herd instinct) dictates that individuals feel they are behaving correctly when they act the same as other people. The attraction of generational stereotypes performs a similar function in seeking to reduce the complexity of behaviours and attitudes to simpler narratives (as a form of social proof).

In exploring the perspectives and practices that will assist young managers to more effectively manage people who are the same age or older,

this Discussion Paper will examine the stereotypes attributed to Generation Y managers so that a more informed view may emerge when engaging individually with high-potential people in your workplace.

## Research perspectives

A most compelling observation from Cogin (2012) highlights the gulf between rhetoric and truth.

“*Much of the work on generations has been based on observation rather than large-scale empirical findings, and very little academic research has been done on the characteristics and expectations of generations and their implications for the workplace. A lack of attention to multigenerational research has resulted in decisions being made by HRM practitioners based on claims in the popular press whose underlying assumptions have been largely permitted without scrutiny.*”  
(Cogin, 2012, p.2269).

If the foundational premise of research is framed around the generation paradigm, the analysis and subsequent reporting of results embeds the stereotype. Research by Van Velsor and Wright for the Centre for Creative Leadership (2012) captured the perceptions of managers about what excites and concerns leaders most about the next generation. In providing these comments, were leaders of today simply reporting the popular stereotypes back to the researchers?

What excites leaders most about Generation Y?

- Their comfort/skill with technology and social networks for information/connectivity
- They are creative, open, and bring fresh ideas
- Their multi-cultural/global awareness and tolerance of difference

- They are adaptable, learning-oriented, and used to the pace of change
- Their confidence and willingness to take a stand; challenge the status quo
- Their energy, enthusiasm, dedication and work ethic
- They are collaborative, team-oriented and work across boundaries
- Their service-oriented leadership and desire to make a difference

Reading this list, there are a number of impressive aspects which behoves well the future of leadership. For those reading this Discussion Paper, consider these attributes as they may have applied to you as you embarked on your professional management career. How many of these attributes did you possess at the time and evidence now? In light of this, how relevant are the stereotypes that are promoted today?

What concerns leaders most about the next generation?

- They have an unjustified/unrealistic sense of entitlement, need for instant gratification and affirmation
- They lack the ability to communicate effectively face-to-face and are over-dependent on technology
- They lack a strong work ethic, focus/commitment/drive, and are not self-motivating.
- They lack learning opportunities (mentoring, positive role models, and training) adequate for the future challenges they will face
- They need decision-making skills, long-term perspective, and ability to understand complexity

# RQ1

- They lack a strong sense of values, ethics, and social responsibility
- They lack reflection/self-awareness/maturity
- They are overconfident/not open to input or feedback; their view is the only view

If you are reading this Discussion Paper as an older manager, how many of these comments were attributed to you (perhaps incorrectly) when you commenced your career? Or are the stereotypical comments arising from jealousy or the need for self-assurance by others?

Many of the comments made of each generation by those who precede them are somewhat similar. Through the prism of extensive commercial or professional experience the assessment of a younger person's current ability will inevitably fall short. With time and intentional exposure to growth experiences the one constant that gives confidence is the human spirit and the desire to succeed. Responsibility for this rests with both senior management and the young manager.

What is at play is life-stage development which underscores the vital contribution that senior leaders can make to develop people within their organisations. Reluctance to engage in such activity has been attributed to a reluctance to share power, a common theme reflected in Shakespearean plays and other writings over the millennia. Is the intergenerational conflict a construction of older leaders seeking to diminish or erode the challenge from younger leaders as they begin to make their mark?

The value of using research published in peer-reviewed journals is to provide a solid foundation upon which more informed discussion should occur:

*“It is important to researchers and practitioners to respond assertively to the misinformed promulgation of unsubstantiated information about generational differences ... There is more variability within a generation than there is between generations. Tension among generations is primarily a result of a combination of a lack of data and an overreliance on opinion rather than empirical results. If we collectively did a better job of shining a light on data rather than simply relying on ill-informed opinion, generational conflict and misunderstanding that exists in the workplace would diminish ... And we would all be beneficiaries.”*

(Deal et al., 2007, p.198)

# OBSERVATIONS

Open minds and intelligent communication may overcome many of the issues attributed to generational differences. From an examination of the stereotypical perceptions, participants were candid in expressing their views. As individuals, their views were understandably disparate, underscoring the importance for up-line managers to avoid preconceived notions of how young managers in their organisations are likely to respond.

Insights derived from research and participant reflection serve to clarify and enhance practical management of the following:

## Respect

The interpretation of personal interactions is foundational to subsequent behaviours. Everyone wants respect. Problems arise when individuals fail to interpret situations in a way that others perceive as being appropriate. Trying to see the situation from the other person's perspective is an enduring life strategy.

## Values

Values guide motivations that drive behaviour. Good communication, rather than basing decisions on behavioural reactions, will facilitate greater cohesion in the workplace. Take time to look beyond the behaviour to the underlying motivation. Behind this lies the value framework that guides the individual.

## Motivation

Every person is motivated by work/ causes/interests that appeal to them. The challenge is to understand how to tap into the motivations around matters that are shared in the work people do. Motivation is reflected in the level of engagement that people have to the task. As such 'engagement' is an outward measure of something much more significant; that of alignment where people feel they can achieve aspirations that are personally relevant through the work they do and with clear line of sight to the organisation's purpose.

## Commitment

Commitment has many measures. The legitimacy of hours or attendance at work is being challenged by output and outcomes. Flexible work practices change the relevance of the traditional metrics as they should. Being 'present' should be more about focus and delivery of outcomes rather than physical presence. Where work arrangements permit, flexible work practices provide a powerful demonstration of trust in and commitment to employees. The reciprocation is evidenced in quality and timeliness of output. Thus the psychological contract between employer and employee is undergoing subtle changes wherein candid and honest commitment is a

# OBSERVATIONS

two-way conversation, a negotiated agreement on what matters most to both parties.

## Experience

The question of experience revolves around the relevance of what has been learnt and can be applied to the task at hand. Stage in career and life expands an individual's experience but the adhocery of this is often very inefficient. Senior management has a vital role to play in mentoring and structuring developmental roles to accelerate the acquisition and application of experience. The measure of experience gained is in direct proportion to the leadership provided by senior management in assisting young managers.

## Entitlement

Self-assurance can be misunderstood as arrogance that also conveys a sense of entitlement. As experience rounds the edges of this self-assurance, the issue of entitlement diminishes. Most people are enthusiastic to do their best. In pushing forward, assumptions can be made about opportunities and resources that should be readily forthcoming. Interpreting this behaviour as entitlement may cloud the underlying motivation; simply wanting to excel in the shortest possible time.

## Communication

Behaviour more than language is the loudest part of communication. Technology is both an inhibitor and facilitator of communication behaviour which is dependent on the context and importance of the situation. Candid communication requires skill, respect and courage such that technology should give way to face-to-face interaction. This is an individual challenge irrespective of generation but behoves senior managers to set a standard of appropriate

communication behaviour that serves as a benchmark for managers with less contextual experience.

## Work/life balance

The flip side of commitment is burnout. Work/life balance is a matter that can't be abrogated by the individual and should be the result of candid and negotiated agreement of the standards that are deemed appropriate. That there is ebb and flow in work/life balance is a function of business activity as much as the demands of life-stage. A more useful framework is to consider the extent and direction of work/life or life/work integration. Back of this should be a strategy to position work as a vehicle through which personally important aspirations may be achieved.

## Retention

We live and work in a democracy. Retention is a term that captures the redundant perspective that there is something wrong or disloyal about people seeking to move their career beyond their current employer. A better measure would be 'maintenance of meaning'. As people's careers evolve over the life-span, the relevance and meaning of the position and work they do will change. Most people want to make a positive contribution and have impact in the work they do; this is a major aspect of achieving personal wellbeing. Maintaining meaning is a function of ongoing skill development to enable people to deliver on their commitment to the purpose and vision of the organisation. When this deteriorates so does the reason to stay.

Generation or birth cohort has no place in any of these discussions. These are matters that require individual attention and a more sophisticated approach in management.

## RQ2: What perspectives and practices will accelerate a young manager's development as an effective leader?



In addressing the second research question, insights from Dries and Pepermans (2006), should assist organisations to assess the leadership potential of a young manager. As each organisation will have different strategic imperatives for sustaining competitive advantage, organisations are encouraged to consider how these imperatives influence the extent (and weighting) of traits evidenced by young managers:

1. The extent to which they can deal with increasingly complex information, decisions and problems
2. The degree to which they are willing and able to learn from experience, and
3. Whether they exhibit an emphasis, tendency, or attraction toward leadership.

In equal measure, young managers might assess their employer's ability to provide the experience and mentoring support that will accelerate their development as an effective leader. This two-way discussion would logically occur in the development of action plans that follow performance appraisals, but should also occur informally and more frequently.

How then are young managers assessing their leadership development experience? This paper looks first at the perspectives from research and comments from study participants. After this the paper examines 16 leadership practices and the importance the study participants placed on

each as they responded to the depth interview questions (refer full report). Both perspectives and practices should provide good insights for both organisations and young managers to accelerate their development as effective leaders.

# OBSERVATIONS



Perspectives about what constitutes good leadership are both dynamic and situational. We know superb leadership when we experience it and we know it when it has catastrophically failed. Young managers are on a steep leadership learning curve. Transitioning to leadership requires a progressive change in professional identity, moving from personal performance to seeing success as an outcome of team performance.

It is a mistake to believe that extroverted young managers will make good leaders; the reality is they may be challenged to listen to other people when things are going wrong. Conversely introverted leaders are more disposed to listen and consider other's input before taking action. The important developmental point is that both predispositions can be effective if the developmental programs internalise behaviours that enact good leadership.

Agility and resilience come from developing a repertoire of appropriate management responses. This should not happen by accident. Purposeful exposure to developmental experiences, backed by mentoring and debriefing with coaches is a valuable investment. Career derailment occurs when the leadership challenges expose the foundations as being too narrow or lacking in depth of experience.

As young managers the measure of success is gauged by how well they manage and motivate

their direct reports; how well they emulate the investment by others in them.

Study participants underscored the importance placed on mentoring from above and respectfully listening to and learning from the experience of their older direct reports. The velocity and scope of work to a young manager committed to excelling can be overwhelming. Loath to raise this with up-line managers, for fear of being seen as lacking capacity, the risks are burn-out and career derailment.

Leadership development has a substantial informal component from up-line managers. It is understood that enduring lessons of how not to manage come from having an ineffective up-line manager. The risks are high for the organisation and it is a poor substitute for more sophisticated developmental programs. Leadership development is a two-way responsibility with senior managers investing time to develop superb young managers to take the organisation into the future. It behoves young managers to make the most of the opportunities by stepping-up and proposing initiatives that leverage what they can bring to the situation. That there will be problems is assured. How well they deal with them will be a function of practical insight, communication, personal application and resilience.

Study participants were asked a range of questions (refer full report) to identify issues or

# OBSERVATIONS

concerns they were confronting as they developed their management careers. Of the 110 comments, the highest numbers of responses (75%) were received for six questions. The responses participants have kindly shared may serve as a useful guide to shaping expectations and outcomes of future developmental programs.

**Table 2: Depth interview response profile**

Priority	Depth interview questions	Responses received
1	What particular approaches/styles have been most successful?	29
T2	What success stories would you like to share?	13
T2	What advice would you give to other young managers?	13
4	What are the most stressful challenges you have dealt with so far in your career?	12
T5	How have you coped with setbacks and disappointments?	8
T5	What aspects of the work environment have helped your personal growth as a manager?	8

Looking more deeply, participants highlighted five leadership practices that were most challenging:

**Table 3: Leadership practice priorities**

Priority	Leadership practices	Responses received
1	Career management	22
T2	Self-awareness	13
T2	Change management	13
4	Participative management	10
5	Leading employees	9

Awareness of these matters may also provide a degree of comfort to those following that their experiences and concerns are to be expected and are quite normal. How senior management utilises this information will influence the successful development and retention of their future leaders.

# CONCLUSIONS



In developing superb young managers for the future, AIM is concerned that poor management practices are arising based on generational stereotypes. This Discussion Paper sought to answer two questions:

1. What perspectives and practices will assist young managers to more effectively manage people who are the same age or older than them, and
2. What perspectives and practices will accelerate young managers' development as effective leaders?

Open minds and intelligent communication may quarantine organisations from the generational stereotype contagion. This is applicable for people of all ages, not just young managers, but does require people to pause long enough to consider the impact of stereotypical behaviour on others.

Confirming other research, everyone wants respect. Where values are shared in the workplace, motivation and commitment are outcome measures of this alignment and mutuality of purpose. Ongoing learning is captured by considered placement in roles that enhance the repertoire of management response. This is where diversity counts as rapidly evolving situations may require a unique response from the mosaic of experience within the management team. While young managers will have to rely more on

this strategy, the benefit of co-creation is shared commitment to the solution.

Rapid prototyping of a young manager's career, evidenced through increased mobility, could be seen as having low commitment to the organisation. A more insightful perspective is that growing career capital is a shared responsibility between the organisation and the young manager. While the work remains meaningful and the mentoring supportive of deepening management skill, loyalty will be more secure. High performance and productivity is a reciprocal expectation. Moving up or moving out is now a mutually recognised strategy for both organisations and workers alike.

In so many ways, workers of all ages share the same perspectives although they may be manifested in different behaviours. Young managers are more likely to be overt about how they feel and behave but this does not diminish the reality that others may harbour the same sentiments but express them in different ways. It really becomes a focus on the individual rather than the stereotype.

Accelerating young managers' development as effective leaders is both contextual and intentional. Each organisation will have strategic imperatives for sustaining their competitive advantage. How effectively they do this is driven by the intentionality and commitment of senior managers to developing

# CONCLUSIONS



programs around quality leadership perspectives and practices.

Participants to this research were most responsive to sharing their views about successful management styles. Particular emphasis was placed on the leadership practices of participative management, leading employees, self-awareness, change management, and doing whatever it takes. Reflecting on the success they have achieved thus far in their careers, attention focussed on the importance of participative management using listening skills and communication to build consensus. In terms of the most stressful challenges they have experienced, a broad range of issues emerged including confronting employee problems, decisiveness, straightforwardness, participative management, change management and career management.

Development of programs that will accelerate a young manager's effectiveness will exhibit a dynamic tension between evaluating the contextual opportunities that provide depth of experience and the natural impatience of young managers to accelerate their careers. There is nothing new in this. What this research does confirm is the value of customising development to the individual's capacities and capabilities. Leveraging the deep knowledge and wisdom that experienced managers possess through mentoring young managers is a process on which they place high value.

We conclude that a focus on the individual rather than the stereotype will accelerate the true potential of young managers as they develop the perspectives and practices that matter.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY



- Cole, G., Lucas, L., & Smith, R. (2002). The debut of generation Y in the American workforce. *Journal of Business Administration Online*, 1(2), 1-10.
- Cogin, J. (2012). Are generational differences in work values fact or fiction? Multi-country evidence and implications. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23(11), 2268-2294.
- Davies, P.G., Spencer, S.J., & Steele, C.M. (2005). Clearing the air: Identify safety moderates the effects of stereotype threat on women's leadership aspirations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88, 276-287.
- Deal, J. J. (2007). *Retiring the Generation Gap*, Centre for Creative Leadership, San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- Deal, J. J., Altman, D. G. & Rogelberg, S. G. (2010). Millennials at Work: What We Know and What We Need to Do (If Anything). *Journal of Business Psychology*, 25, 191-199.
- Dries, N., & Pepermans, R. (2012) How to identify leadership potential: Development and testing of a consensus model. *Human Resource Management*, May-June, 51 (3), 361-385.
- Gentry, W.A., Griggs, T.L., Deal, J.J., Mondore, S.P. and Cox, B.D. (2011). A comparison of generational differences in endorsement of leadership practices with actual leadership skill level. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 63(1), 39-49.
- Heider, F. (1958). *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Kowske, B. J., Rasch, R. & Wiley, J. (2010). Millennials' (Lack of) Attitude Problem: An Empirical Examination of Generational Effects on Work Attitudes. *Journal of Business Psychology*, 25, 265-279.
- Lancaster, L.C. & Stillman, D. (2002). *When Generations Collide: Who They Are. Why They Clash. How to Solve the Generational Puzzle at Work*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Leo, J. (2003). The good-news generation. U.S. *News & World Report*, 135(15), 60-61.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Masi Jr, F., (2010). *The correlation of retention: An investigation of the relationship between what is important to employees and what is perceived to be important to their managers*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Capella University, UMI Dissertation Publishing, Number 3397667.
- Nguyen, H.H.D., & Ryan, A.M. (2008). Does stereotype threat affect test performance of minorities and women? A meta-analysis of experimental evidence. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93, 1314-1334.
- Raines, C. (2002). *Connecting Generations: The Sourcebook for a New Workplace*. Berkley, CA: Crisp. Retrieved from [www.generationsatwork.com/articles/millennials.htm](http://www.generationsatwork.com/articles/millennials.htm)
- Smola, K. W. & Sutton, C. D. (2002). Generational Differences: Revisiting Generational Work Values for the New Millennium. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, 23, 363-382.
- Steele, C.M., Spencer, S.J. & Aronson, J. (2002). Contending with group image: the psychology of stereotype threat and social identity threat. In M.P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (pp.379-440). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Trzesniewski, K. H., & Donnellan, M. B. (2010). Rethinking "Generation Me": A study of cohort effects from 1976-2006. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5, 58-75.
- Trzesniewski, K. H., Donnellan, M. B., & Robins, R. W. (2008). "Generation Me" really more narcissistic than previous generations? *Journal of Personality*, 76(4), 875-901.
- Van Velsor, E., & Wright, J. (2012). *Expanding the Leadership Equation: Developing Next-Generation Leaders*. Centre for Creative Leadership, [www.ccl.org](http://www.ccl.org)
- Von Hippel, C., Issa, M., Ma, R., & Stokes, A. (2011). Stereotype threat: antecedents and consequences for working women. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 41, 151-161.
- Von Hippel, C., Henry, J., & Kalokerinos, E. (2011). *Stereotype Threat and Mature Age Workers*. National Seniors Productive Ageing Centre, Australia, December 2011.
- Weston, M.J. (2006). Integrating generational perspectives in nursing. *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, 11(2), 12-22.
- Wong, M., Gardiner, E., Lang, W. & Coulon, L. (2008). Generational differences in personality and motivation: do they exist and what are the implications for the workplace? *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(8), 878-890.