

# **An Evaluation of American Millennials Leading Global Teams: A Multidimensional Framework for Planning and Optimizing Success**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Individuals born in America between 1982 and 2000 are, in popular culture, referred to as the millennial generation. These individuals comprise the youngest and most populous generation to enter the American workforce over the last decade, numbering approximately 76 million (Howe and Strauss, 2000).

This paper examines certain challenges that these incoming members of the industrial workforce will face as they gain work experience and are presented with opportunities to step into a succession of supervisory roles – up to and including senior management – beginning now, and over many years to come.

This management dynamic will become the subject of increasing scrutiny as the current generation of senior business leaders continues to age toward retirement. Based on the rapidly accelerating rate of retirement within the “baby boomer” generation in America (Taylor, 2014), this emerging next generation of millennial business leaders will carry the burden of leading workers in increasingly complex, geographically and culturally diverse work environments.

This is especially true considering the pervasive increase in the globalization of business over the last several decades, which has required multinational organizations to identify and select internationally adept leaders for management positions who are capable of managing groups of culturally diverse employees (Northouse, 2016). New leaders are expected to possess and project specific managerial traits, competencies and behaviors in order to be successful working within and across these diverse organizations.

In this paper, we compare and contrast the leadership and management traits of these up and coming American millennials, as described and categorized in the GLOBE research study, with the kinds of global leadership assignments that may become available to them, along with the competency requirements that will be expected of them.

We evaluate various research findings against the notion that the traits and competencies most prevalent among American millennials might be better suited for leading teams in certain geographic regions of the world, but not others.

Accordingly, any investment in the education and training of these leaders must be carefully scrutinized from the perspective of maximizing the return of such investments, including choosing educational strategies, curricula and delivery methods that are relevant and capable of making a positive difference in driving the desired management behaviors and organizational results. Such initiatives must also take into account the placement of individual leaders into appropriate job assignments, organizations, geographical locations and cultures where the likelihood for high performance and overall success can be optimized. To achieve the highest levels of effectiveness, these leaders must attain “specific results (i.e., outcomes) . . . through specific actions, while maintaining or being consistent with policies, procedures and conditions of the organization environment” (Boyatzis, 1982).

Does this suggest that American millennial leaders should be trained to meet a generic, one-size-fits-all leadership skill set or performance standard that is intended to be universally effective wherever these leaders are deployed throughout the world? Or should leadership development initiatives for these individuals be tailored to enhance existing strengths and capabilities matched to targeted roles, organizations, geographies and cultures where there is already a perceived natural predilection for success?

In serving either scenario, what theory, criteria, model or framework will the organization’s key decision makers invoke when considering these questions and determining an implementation strategy?

The research approach to be utilized in this study will be the Grounded Theory method, whereby we look at American millennial traits and those traits required for leading international teams using the GLOBE study (House, 2004) as the starting point for our analysis. Assigning a numerical designation to each American millennial trait, we compare these to each of the GLOBE study’s six defined leadership traits, then develop a method of calculating values for comparison purposes to each of the nine different geographic locations illustrated in the GLOBE study.

By comparing American millennial traits with the GLOBE study, we further develop a point of view about where, when and how various leadership traits align with the predominant traits of work teams within different geographies and cultures, and what those teams need or expect from their managers.

From this analysis, we will develop a multidimensional framework for helping to identify key management traits, competencies, leadership values and cultural attributes that can be adapted to align with, and support, any organization’s strategy.

This framework will further serve to inform strategic decisions about the training and development of American millennial leaders tailored to their specific job assignments and the geographical and cultural environs in which they work, ultimately optimizing their leadership effectiveness and the operational results of the organizations they lead.

## **BACKGROUND**

American Millennials, born between 1982 and 2000, are the youngest and most populous generation in America entering the workforce today, numbering approximately 76 million (Howe and Strauss, 2000). The Millennial generation, also known as Generation "Y," has a wealth of technology acumen, is group oriented and possesses a positive attitude (Steinwart 2009, Tapscott, 1998).

The oldest cohort in the United States of America is the Baby Boomer generation, defined by being born between 1946 and 1964, with a population of 80 million. This generation has about 10,000 members reaching the age of fifty-five each day. The Generation “X” group is defined by being born between 1965 and 1984, with a smaller population than the other two cohorts at an estimated 46 million. (Fore, 2012)

The rapid retirement of the Baby Boomer generation coupled with the sheer size of the Millennials cohort has forced Millennials into leadership positions faster than both the Generation X and Baby Boomer groups, creating rapid advancement within the Millennials ranks, but with potential consequences

tied to the communication and leadership differences present within these different generations (Fore, 2012).

Today's S&P companies' international revenue represents 52% of their total yearly revenue stream (Goldstein, 2015). This globalization trend has forced and incentivized companies to develop cross-cultural teams to penetrate emerging markets and expand in existing markets, while simultaneously increasing the economic, social, technical and political interdependence between nations. Also, globalization has required multinational organizations to identify and select appropriate leaders for these entities, and to manage groups with culturally diverse employees (Northouse, 2016).

Millennials will hold leadership positions within these multi-national companies and will be leading employees with diverse cultural backgrounds. These young and emerging leaders will need to project specific managerial behaviors to be successful in these culturally diverse, team-oriented work environments.

## **MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEE/LEADERSHIP TRAITS**

Millennials, as employees, expect to receive sensitivity to their work-life balance, space to do their job, have a say in their work and their business, be rewarded for successes and be given frequent constructive feedback (Espinoza, 2010). As followers, Millennials do not thrive under an authority leadership style and as leaders, they lead with tolerance for others, are value-centered, rule oriented and culturally sensitive (Fore 2012).

Millennial managers expect to give fresh perspective and ideas, utilize technology, provide honest opinions and feedback, and receive high productivity and energy from their employees. They are highly inclusive and do not like to discriminate against others. They have close relationships with their parents and expect that their professional relationships with staff will also be close. Because of their constant utilization of technology and social media, Millennial managers expect to combine their personal and professional lives, while posting information about both for the entire company and public to view (Espinoza, 2010).

Their exposure to, and utilization of, the features and functions of Web 2.0 (such as Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram) from an early age, throughout their formative years and into adulthood has developed unique communication habits and expectations. For example, through the constant utilization of email and texting, Millennials have developed a sense of instantaneous feedback from any individual they communicate with electronically (Fore, 2012).

In addition to Millennial's technological experiences that have influenced their social patterns of behavior, they also reflect socialization influenced by parental nurturing and praise that is far greater than any previous generation. They value the relationships they have built with parents and other family members, but lack self-awareness on the higher power sharing distances present in more vertical organizations. Millennials enjoy and desire to work in teams, are goal oriented and want immediate feedback for their performance. (Fore 2012)

## **TECHNOLOGY AND MILLENNIALS**

Technology has seen tremendous advancements over the past 50 years. The public release of Netscape in August 1995, which was the first Internet browser that enabled the general public to utilize the Internet for personal use, serves as the starting point for much of this acceleration of technology. Up until that point, the Internet was predominantly used by science and academia (Friedman, 2005). Facebook was released to the public on February 4, 2004 (Phillips S., 2007). Twitter was released to the public in July 2006. (Carlson N., 2011), Instagram in October 2010 (Deseromaux, G., 2014) and Snapchat in September 2011 (Crook, Escher, 2015).

All of these social media platforms were part of the Web 2.0. Each of these technology release timelines sits directly within most of the current Millennial generation worker's young lives, and each became a fully functioning social media platform as these Millennials developed into early adulthood.

Web 2.0 has been a definitive influencing factor in the communication skill development of the Millennial generation (O, Reilly, 2005). It has rapidly and widely enabled users to interact and create user-generated content, such as blogging, wiki's, forums, etc. Good examples of this type of technology utilization can be readily seen on such ubiquitous platforms as Facebook and Twitter.

The term Web 2.0 originated from the O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 Conference in late 2004. Although Web 2.0 suggests a new version of the World Wide Web, it does not refer to an update to any technical specifications, but rather to the cumulative changes in the way Web pages are made and used (O'Reilly, 2005).

This ubiquitous use of Social Media as a dominant way to communicate and solve problems has shaped Millennial managers toward a management orientation that is fast paced, transparent and predisposed to immediate reaction, and a feeling that technology can be a useful tool for any leader to utilize in almost any situation. While technology plays an important part within a Millennial managers' leadership portfolio, other cultures may not be as open or accepting of transparency in their professional and personal lives, as well as in their inner-team and managerial communication styles.

## **LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR AND CULTURE**

The GLOBE research program, which stands for Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness, was initiated by Robert House in 1991, involving more than 160 investigators and measuring the responses of 17,000 managers in more than 950 organizations, representing 62 different cultures through the world (Northouse, 2016). GLOBE researchers identified six Global Leadership behaviors and then measured those behaviors from most desired to least desired in ten different geographical locations throughout the world. The ten different geographic segments are Eastern European, Latin American, Latin Europe, Confucian Asian, Nordic Europe, Anglo, Sub-Saharan, Southern Asia, Germanic Europe and Middle-East (House, 2004, Northouse, 2016). These leadership traits combine to produce the most desired leader, given the culture represented. Each of the ten different geographic sectors require a different combination of leadership traits to be most effective.

### **Six Global Leadership Behaviors - GLOBE Study.** (House, 2004, Northouse, 2016)

1. **Charismatic/value-based leadership** reflects the ability to inspire, to motivate, and to expect high performance from others based on strongly held core values.
2. **Team-oriented leadership** emphasizes team building and a common purpose among team members.
3. **Participative leadership** reflects the degree to which leaders involve others in making and implementing decisions.
4. **Humane-oriented leadership** emphasizes being supportive, considerate, compassionate, and generous.
5. **Autonomous leadership** refers to independent and individualistic leadership, which includes being autonomous and unique.
6. **Self-protective leadership** reflects behaviors that ensure the safety and security of the leader and the group.

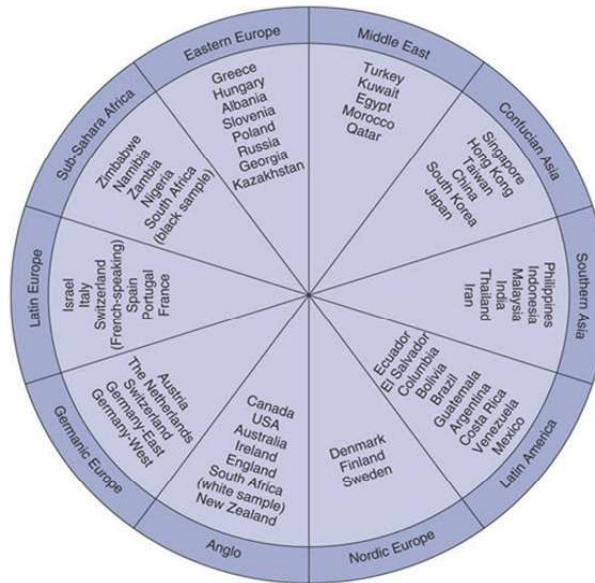
### **GLOBE Leadership Traits, Desired by Geographic Region**

*(Leadership Traits in order of most important too least important)*

<b>Sub-Saharan:</b>	Humane, Charismatic, Team Oriented, Participative, Self- Protective, Autonomous
<b>Anglo:</b>	Charismatic, Participative, Humane, Team Oriented, Autonomous, Self- Protective
<b>Latin Europe:</b>	Charismatic, Team Oriented, Participative, Self- Protective, Humane, Autonomous
<b>Nordic Europe:</b>	Charismatic, Participative, Team Oriented, Autonomous, Humane, Self- Protective
<b>Latin America:</b>	Charismatic, Team Oriented, Self-Protective, Participative, Humane, Autonomous
<b>Confucian Asia:</b>	Self- Protective, Team Oriented, Humane, Charismatic, Autonomous, Participative

**Germanic Europe:** Autonomous, Charismatic, Participative, Humane, Team Oriented, Self-Protective  
**Southern Asia:** Self-Protective, Charismatic, Humane, Team Oriented, Autonomous, Participative  
**Middle-East:** Self-Protective, Humane, Autonomous, Charismatic, Team Oriented, Participative  
**Eastern European:** Autonomous, Self-Protective, Charismatic, Team Oriented, Humane, Participative

**FIGURE 1**



Source: House, R. J. (2004). *Culture, leadership, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

American Millennials have been raised in a collaborative, open sharing environment where the line is blurred between those in charge and those who are following. This "horizontal" outlook of the world has entered into their workplace thought process and their communication style as young leaders, with varying degrees of success and failure (Steinwart, 2009). As leaders, they have brought their inclusiveness and collaborative style of communication across multiple technology platforms to the workplace and enabled a more holistic form of the traditional team environment.

American Millennials have had significant successes in business startups and technology innovation. Companies such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram were started by, and are still being run by, Millennials in senior leadership positions. The technology industry, which is currently dominated by Millennials, has had a tremendous effect on society around the globe and has fundamentally changed the way people view the world and their respective work roles. Millennials' style of communication translates well into companies that hire and promote services and products primarily to Millennials, but it is still difficult to accurately predict whether this open sharing communication style will lead to their long-term success or failure as leaders.

In comparison, global leaders display traits and behaviors that are based on the cultural differences of the geographic locations in which they serve. Each respective region rewards a different combination of leadership traits, and consequently leaders must demonstrate a different combination of the six leadership traits to be most effective, depending on their team's cultural background.

For purposes of this paper, the researchers have interpreted American Millennial leadership traits, detailed earlier, to match those characteristics of the GLOBE study, using some interpolation. By

combining the American Millennial leadership traits with the GLOBE traits, we enable a comparison to be made between the two using common criteria.

American Millennial's leadership behaviors are most associated with the following Global Leadership Traits, as defined by the GLOBE study: Humane-Oriented, Participative, and Team Oriented. We use a nominal scale to assign numerical values to the six different Global Leadership Traits (1=Autonomous, 2=Self Protective, 3=Charismatic, 4=Team Oriented, 5=Humane, 6=Participative) and then compare this to the GLOBE study, which measured the desirability of each trait. We then ranked in order of importance all six Global Leadership Traits for each of the ten different geographic locations.

Based on this scoring methodology, American Millennials would appear to be best suited to lead teams within the following geographic regions (from most suited to least suited).

1. Sub Saharan
2. Anglo
3. Latin Europe
4. Nordic Europe
5. Latin America
6. Confucian Asia
7. Germanic
8. Southern Asia
9. Middle-East
10. Eastern Europe

This ranking reflects the desirability of the following behaviors – Humane, Participative and Team-Oriented – as being the most desired traits for a leader within the respective region. These leadership traits are most closely aligned with American Millennials' behaviors and could help organizations understand and utilize the strengths Millennials possess when building international teams or considering the deployment of leaders into new job assignments within specific regions around the world.

While this research is not a definitive assessment of American Millennials leadership capabilities throughout different regions of the world, it does show that certain Millennial leadership traits might be more effective in certain geographical areas based on cultural similarities of these Millennials matched to the desired leadership traits associated with the culture in that region.

Further research will be completed during the course of this study to move forward from the initial work completed here in Phase 1 to build and articulate a multidimensional framework for planning and optimizing the success of American Millennials in their quest to lead global organizations, focusing on best practices for the selection, assignment and development of these emerging leaders, as outlined in the ensuing phases shown here.

Phase 1. *Evaluating American Millennials and their perceived leadership traits*, comparing those to the results of the GLOBE study.

Phase 2. Understand and optimize *how emerging American Millennial leaders are chosen or assigned to job roles* in global business organizations.

Phase 3. Develop a framework for optimizing American Millennials' leadership effectiveness according to their current *traits and competencies*.

Phase 4. Inform and tailor *leadership development initiatives* for American Millennials in academic institutions and corporate training departments to address and match situational needs for individuals and teams across a range of global regions and cultures.

Phase 5. *Offer a job assignment and readiness decision model* for American Millennials preparing for global leadership assignments.

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