

## The Hidden Cultural Shift That Will Determine Your Company's Leadership for the Next 20 Years

If you've worked closely with me, you have probably noticed that I see what's going on inside of people, often before they see it themselves. I pick up the zeitgeist of the moment, and next the next wave coming. Whether it's nature or nurture that gave me this gift is too complex a question for a mere ezine, and probably not of much interest to you.

But what does matter is that I've been picking something up for the last four years and it's been growing each year. Now I see it forming into a cultural transition big enough for the big research firms to start reporting about it, so I've decided it's time to reveal this transition to you and why I think it is so important.

Much like a surfer, you can ride this cultural wave if you know what it is and if you prepare to ride it as it's building, instead of trying to ride it after it's already fully formed. And my husband will tell you from experience you have to be the one to catch that big wave or the guy next to you will.

This big shift is impossible to describe in pure business terms, so I won't even try. It's a massive shift in values, deep down inside for many, many people.

If you've ever tried to lead anyone anywhere, you know that it won't happen unless it resonates with their values. In a business, that starts with the values of your most essential top performers at each tier, the employees with the highest potential, the opinion leaders, and your next generation of senior leadership. If you're on board with their values, the rest will follow.

So what are the new top values that motivate your employees? Prepare to be surprised. I find that very few leaders are already in tune with this change.

- *Love*. Yes, the Big L is making a comeback. People aren't fools. They look around them and observe. They observe that loving personal relationships take time. They observe that working relationships can't be a substitute for personal relationships because they get torn apart all of the time due to layoffs, reorganizations, and work functions moving to other geographic locations.

There is absolutely no way an individual can have any control over whether he or she will see the same people at work tomorrow who are there today -- if they even see anybody at all.

By contrast, investing time, effort, and tenderness your spouse, children, family, and friends builds a loving bond that will not be torn apart by events beyond your control. It's no wonder love is back.

- *Doing the right thing.* How else do we explain the massive interest of the finest Ivy League MBA's in non-profit work that pays crap?

This trend pre-dates the Great Recession and is linked to a much larger and longer-term shift. The Baby Boom generation wanted desperately to make the world a better place. Alas, they were unable or unwilling to shake up the fundamental structure of business, they ran out of money, got jobs, kept their heads down, and crammed in whatever world improvements they could fit in to their limited free time.

Along the way, they raised the next generation of children and instilled their values in them. We have two absolutely enormous generations in the workplace, both intensely motivated to do the right thing. One generation has 40 years of pent-up desire to unleash, and the other is too young to cynically assume that it can't be done.

- *Personal well-being.* A mix of mental, physical, and spiritual health. For years well-being has been touted as something that could be achieved through one's profession, and tremendous effort has been put into finding a career that suits you, finding a work culture that suits you, and being happy, reasonably challenged, and content at work.

But this notion in isolation is a complete fallacy, since work satisfaction is just one of the elements of well-being, and if work consumes too much of your energy, your well-being will inevitably suffer from the complete lack of attendance to the other aspects of personal well-being.

So how will this cultural shift determine your company's leadership for the next 20 years, and what can you do to leverage it instead of being the surfer who failed to catch the wave?

***Start with the assumption that the biggest challenge you'll face is that nobody who's any good wants your job when you're ready to move on.***

Feeling nervous about that? I am. When I look at the current demands of business leadership, I see them crashing against these values. *How can you invest in loving relationships outside of work if you're always working?*

*How can you do the right thing when every few years you're ordered to lay off your direct reports because they're no longer relevant to the new strategy and your senior leadership doesn't want to invest in retraining them?*

Or when you're ordered to install ergonomically damaging lab equipment because the expense of the cheaper lab equipment plus the projected workplace injuries is less than the expense of the ergonomically improved equipment?

Or when you're told that you should do the audit at the same client where you're doing financial consulting services because the consulting is so much more profitable?

(All three are true examples I've personally witnessed.)

*How can you experience well-being when you have to get up at 4:00 in order to fit in your exercise and you wrap up your workday several hours after dinner? When the dental appointment to fix the rotting nerve in your tooth keeps getting delayed due to work demands? When you have no time to reflect on your day, let alone grow in your spiritual life?*

Do you see now why there may be fewer good candidates for once-coveted leadership roles? Fewer candidates who want the top jobs – always a bad thing. You need to be able to pick your next generation of leadership from the best at every level, not settle for the one and only person who could fog a mirror and actually wanted the job.

It's going to take creativity, flexibility, and the creation some level of actual job security (what a charming and old-fashioned notion) in order to attract the best people to your pipeline.

Now is an incredible time to begin addressing the challenge. The level of disillusionment in the professional workforce exceeds any I've seen in my entire career. They are not happy with their current jobs. They are not impressed with their current leadership. They are disgusted with their company's business practices. But they're not going to reach out to another employer and leave the relative safety of "the devil they know."

Not unless you create an environment that connects in even the smallest way with their deeply held values and internal motivations, because that one true source of motivation is something about human nature that will never change.

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