



Creating a Motivating Work Environment

From the Office of the Future of the Ken Blanchard Companies®

About the Office of the Future

Created by Marjorie Blanchard, PhD, the Office of the Future's function is to study and report on emerging trends in leadership, technology, and other workplace issues. Another primary role is to challenge the company's status quo and act as a catalyst for change that will ensure the company's continued vitality and success. Its findings and reports are available to clients and other organizations to assist with planning for the future and to the media for their use in keeping their readers advised of trends in the workplace.

This document is a summary of research compiled and prepared by The Ken Blanchard Companies® Office of the Future. It is available in PDF format. For further information, contact Lily Guthrie at 800 728-6000 or lily.guthrie@kenblanchard.com.

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Executive Summary

This research sheds light on the important topic of employee passion and commitment. What kind of environment do great leaders create, and how do they behave to foster a motivating environment? What differences appear across generational cohort, gender, and personality type? Understanding these differences can help leaders adjust their behavioral tendencies to better meet the needs of the people they support and depend upon. This study examines the following issues:

- *What are the elements of a high-performing work environment?*
- *What does a leader do to create that environment?*
- *What characteristics are associated with leaders who are considered outstanding?*
- *What are the beliefs of outstanding leaders, and what is the impact of those beliefs?*
- *What specific actions can leaders take to create a healthy, exciting work environment?*

Research Highlights

- In general, regardless of generation, gender, or temperament, most people desire an open, safe, and welcoming environment in which they are encouraged to grow and learn.
- A key motivator for all generations was the ability to do challenging, stimulating, and varied work. However, the motivators appeared to be quite different for each generation group.
- The research suggests that in general, men favored a competitive environment compared to women, who desired “interactive and engaging” environments.
- The research found that leaders played an important role in creating a positive and engaging environment. Mentioned frequently across all groups was an environment that was:
 - 1) supportive and encouraging; 2) interactive and engaging; and 3) being respected and valued.
- Many respondents said that their leader made them feel like a partner, not a subordinate, working together to do important, worthwhile work.
- In general, respondents of both genders—across all generations and temperaments—placed high importance on being treated equally and valued.
- The research suggested that the quality and caliber of the manager were important factors in creating a favorable experience. Characteristics of an outstanding leader included being personable, fun and easygoing, and knowledgeable and competent.
- It appears that leadership is more than a set of skills; it consists of a number of subtle personal qualities that are hard to see, but very powerful. The data suggests that good leaders demonstrated a sincere interest in their people, making them feel valued, respected, and cared for.
- Younger generations mentioned frequently a leader who was down to earth, had a sense of humor, and made the workplace environment fun and engaging.
- There was general agreement among all the groups that the leader’s beliefs about their people’s capabilities and competencies were a major contributor to the respondent’s success.
- Respondents reported that they learned a great deal from the experience of working for a good leader and modeled those same behaviors later in their lives.
- Values such as inclusion, relationship building, and caring are generally considered “feminine” values, yet the men and the women in this study equally favored these values.
- Most differences and similarities found were related to generational cohort and temperament type rather than to gender.

Introduction

What is it that makes one workplace environment conducive to innovation, enthusiasm, and commitment while another is not? Why is it that you can walk into a workplace and feel the energy sparking? What is it about a similar environment that leads to boredom and lack of attention? This paper addresses these important questions and focuses on selected findings from research that examined the key elements that create a positive environment in the workplace and the role leadership plays in fostering that environment.

Insights from this study will be useful to individuals in leadership positions who are interested in creating workplace environments that are healthy and productive. This paper explores not only the elements of an environment that are essential for high performance but also how to create and sustain such excellence. This paper examines the following issues ▶

What makes a high-performing work environment?

What does a leader do to create a high-performing work environment?

What characteristics are associated with leaders who are considered outstanding?

What are the beliefs of outstanding leaders, and what is the impact of those beliefs?

What specific actions can leaders take to create a healthy, exciting work environment?

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was to explore the key elements that comprise a productive and highly energized workplace environment in which people flourish. Do the elements of a high performing environment differ from person to person? Are there universal elements that, when in place, allow people to be magnificent and perform at superior levels, constantly stretching, growing, and being the best they can be? If so, what are these elements and how do leaders create or influence such environments?

The research began with the following hypothesis ▶

There are key elements that constitute an enriching workplace environment that are important to people regardless of generation, gender, or temperament. These core elements, when in place, promote people to thrive and give their best. The study will explore the characteristics, behaviors, and beliefs of leaders who influence the creation of such workplaces and is based on the assumption that great leaders have certain characteristics and management behaviors in common.

Methodology

The research for this study was conducted by the Office of the Future of The Ken Blanchard Companies® and it examined two components: 1) an outstanding learning environment and an exceptional work environment; and 2) the leader's influence in the development of these environments. The research captured feedback from interviews with 240 U.S.-based adults.

The data gathered through the face-to-face interviews was examined with particular attention paid to how the respondents were divided among each of the following three groups:

1. Generations:
Baby Boomers (1946–1964),
Generation X (1965–1980), or
Generation Y (1981–2000)
2. Gender
3. Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator®: The Four Temperament Types: NF, NT, SP, or SJ.
(See Appendix VI)

The number of respondents in each of the three groups was equal (about 80 people). Interviews were conducted, collected, and reviewed carefully to identify emerging themes and patterns. These themes and patterns were then grouped into categories. A simple weight analysis was used to examine the data. Each time a theme or pattern was mentioned, it was counted. This enabled the researchers to determine how individual respondents in each of the groups (generation, gender, and temperament type) viewed the importance of various factors. In addition, the researchers were able to gain a larger perspective of similarities and differences across the groups.

The categories were then rank-ordered by importance (the number of times they were mentioned by the interviewees), noting similarities and differences across the various factors. Next, the researchers looked for elements that were repeated across generation, gender, and temperament, as well as what was unique to each of these groups. Respondents from each of the three groups (generation, gender, and temperament) were asked the following six questions:

1. *What made the learning and/or workplace environment special?*
2. *What did the leader do to create the environment?*
3. *What were the leader's characteristics?*
4. *What were the leader's beliefs?*
5. *What was the impact of the experience?*
6. *How would you characterize relationships among leaders or workers?*

For each question, the concepts and terms mentioned were identified and grouped into several categories, along with a brief description. (See Appendix I for a summary of these categories.) The responses were grouped in the following manner:

1. *What made the learning and/or workplace environment special?*
 - 1) Openness and safety. A positive environment that was fun, supportive, open, and caring.
 - 2) Challenging. A motivating environment in which people were challenged to stretch beyond their comfort zone, grow, and learn.

- 3) Interactive and engaging. A highly energizing and creative environment in which people had the opportunity to experiment and explore new ways of thinking and new ideas.
 - 4) Teamwork. An environment that encouraged participation, collaboration, sharing, and team spirit.
 - 5) Autonomy. An environment in which people had the freedom and flexibility to do their job and make decisions about their work.
 - 6) Inspiring and motivating. An environment that provided meaningful work and was emotionally and intellectually stimulating.
 - 7) Equal treatment. An environment in which people were treated like partners and respected for their unique qualities.
2. *What did the leader do to create the environment?*
- 1) Supportive. The leader provided encouragement, guidance, support, and resources to help people succeed.
 - 2) Interactive and engaging. The leader fostered teamwork, participation, collaboration, and the sharing of information.
 - 3) Being respected and valued. The leader respected and valued people's contributions and opinions and made them feel special.
 - 4) Open and safe. The leader provided a safe playground for people to make mistakes, express their opinions, and try new things.
 - 5) Encouraged autonomy. The leader gave people freedom and flexibility to do the job and make decisions about their work.
 - 6) Role model and/or mentor. The leader demonstrated values and behaviors of a good corporate citizen and role model.
 - 7) Challenging. The leader challenged and pushed people to learn new skills, take risks, and stretch beyond their full potential.
3. *What were the leader's characteristics?*
- 1) Personable. The leader enjoys being around people and understands and relates well with them on a personal level.
 - 2) Fun and easygoing. The leader has a good sense of humor and makes people feel comfortable and at ease.
 - 3) Knowledgeable. The leader is knowledgeable and/or has extensive experience and knowledge in his or her field of expertise.
 - 4) Accessible and approachable. The leader is friendly, approachable, and open-minded to many different points of views.
 - 5) Role model and/or mentor. The leader models what excellence and good behavior look like.

Methodology

- 6) Communicator and listener. The leader really listens and communicates well with his or her people and understands their needs.
 - 7) Encouraging and supportive. The leader is caring, supportive, and genuinely interested in helping his or her people succeed.
 - 8) Intelligent. The leader is intelligent and makes smart decisions.
 - 9) Honest and trustworthy. The leader is straightforward, is honest, and can be trusted.
4. *What were the leader's beliefs?*
- 1) The leader believed that the person was capable, could succeed, and had potential.
 - 2) The leader set high expectations for the person and had confidence that he or she could succeed.
 - 3) Disciplined and serious. The leader shows discipline and drive in accomplishing important work.
5. *What was the impact of the experience?*
- 1) Did a good job or received a good grade
 - 2) Motivated me to pursue more
 - 3) Learned a lot
 - 4) Built my confidence
 - 5) Changed my life
 - 6) Set higher expectations for myself
- 7) Role modeled experience later in life
6. *How would you characterize relationships among leaders or workers?*
- 1) Had good relationships
 - 2) Made good friends
 - 3) Felt a sense of family
 - 4) Created team spirit
 - 5) Had little or no impact on relationships

Although the research involved extensive qualitative analysis and several insights were gleaned, it is not without limitations and further study is recommended. For example, the sample size is somewhat small and no statistical analysis was performed. The weight analysis was conducted and crossed-checked by two researchers. Hopefully, this study provides valuable insight into the kind of workplace environment that is necessary for outstanding performance and growth, and will stimulate others to carry out more in-depth research in this worthwhile subject.

Research Findings

The study uncovered important elements that contribute to creating a productive and energizing work environment in which people have the opportunity to be and do their best. Following are the research findings of the core elements and the leaders' influence in creating that environment. (See Appendix II for results across all groups; Appendix III for results by generation; Appendix IV for results by temperament; and Appendix V for results by temperament.)

What made the learning and/or workplace environment special?

The most important factor mentioned by the majority of respondents was having an open, safe, and welcoming environment. Respondents identified an optimal environment as one that feels friendly, supportive, and caring. Many respondents said they felt empowered to take risks and grow as illustrated in the following remark ▶

"The environment was relaxed, yet focused on work and getting things done. I felt safe, not cautious, and free to be me and express my opinions. I felt safe to disclose and be vulnerable."

Generation X individuals, in particular, ranked "challenging" much higher than other generations, which appears to be consistent with Generation X characteristics. Gen Xers are independent, self-directed, and resourceful. They tend to seek exciting and challenging opportunities to add value to their résumé or career path. Providing opportunities that allow younger workers to interact with their managers is motivating to Gen Xers as indicated in the following remarks ▶

"In my job, I feel empowered and able to take risks. If I need to make a decision, I feel confident in making it. The worst my boss says is, "I would have done this." But she never talks down to me. Even if I make a decision she doesn't agree with, it's okay. I feel empowered to take the responsibility. It enables me to work independently and make decisions to do what I need to do."

A key motivator for all generations was the ability to do challenging, stimulating, and varied work. This is not surprising since typically most workers spend more than one-third of their waking hours each week doing work. However, the motivators appeared to be quite different for each generation group which supports research on differences in generational motivators.

"My leader assumed I could do anything and gave me the freedom to try. He challenged me even when I didn't have confidence. He accepted that I may handle something differently than he would, which didn't make it wrong. He was extremely supportive."

For example, the younger generations want to work on a variety of substantial, important projects that allow them to learn and use new skills. They value training and growth opportunities as well as freedom to complete challenging tasks using their own methods. Younger workers are willing to take on new challenges and responsibilities but not at the cost of having fun and the relationship they value with family and friends. In contrast, older generations feel that it was more important to make a meaningful impact to the success of the organization. For example, Baby Boomers tend to have tremendous pride in their career accomplishments and define themselves through their work.

Research Findings

The research suggests that in general, men favored a competitive environment compared to women, who desired interactive and engaging environments. This supports previous research that has found that, in general, women prefer less competitive environments than men, tend to be more collaborative, and are more concerned with relationship building, inclusiveness, participation, and caring.

Within the temperament types, the SP temperament type group favored an interactive and engaging environment that allowed them to experiment and explore, learn, and grow. This is not unusual for SPs, who desire freedom to act on their impulses, play, and create. SJ men, however, rated teamwork and team spirit as being of very high importance, compared to the other temperaments. An explanation could be that SJs, in general, seek belonging to a group or community and look for stability in relationships and institutions.

What did the leader do to create the environment?

The research found that leaders played an important role in creating a positive and engaging workplace. The most frequently mentioned category across all groups was creating a supportive and encouraging environment. “Interactive and engaging” was found to be the second most important factor for creating a healthy environment. Being respected and valued ranked third across all the groupings.

First, leaders created a supportive and encouraging environment by providing people the opportunity to expand their minds and abilities, to assume responsibility for their own actions, and to find innovative ways to do their work and meet their goals. For example, rather than providing answers and solving problems, the leader asked questions, listened, and involved others in decision making and problem solving. The following examples describe that experience ▶

A key motivator for all generations was the ability to do challenging, stimulating, and varied work.

“We worked well together, had good synergy, and understood the value of teamwork. There was a lot of dialogue and expressing of ideas. I experienced new things, new people, and new languages.”

“My boss empowered me to do my best work and instilled in me a higher level of confidence. We had a lot of conversations and one-on-one meetings to discuss what I was doing well and where I needed improvement. But she did it in a way that I didn’t feel I was being put down in areas where I wasn’t doing well. She saw my potential and gave me opportunities to develop those areas in myself.”

“My leader taught me how to be more resourceful and get the tools I needed to do my job. We had weekly one-on-ones and I called her during the week to touch base and to share successes. She was a good communicator and let me know her expectations, and provided what I needed to do my work.”

Second, leaders created environments that were interactive and engaging, paying attention to building relationships and inclusion. Respondents reported that they felt empowered, could make decisions on their own, and had a sense of control over how to do their work. The following narratives describe how effective leaders created a trusting and warm environment in which people felt valued, respected, and appreciated ▶

Leaders played an important role in creating a positive and engaging workplace.

Many respondents said their leader made them feel like a partner, not a subordinate, working together to do important, worthwhile work. People felt part of something special when they were asked to share their opinion or advice regarding their work. In addition, respondents respected leaders who “rolled up their sleeves and pitched in” to do the necessary work. ▶

Effective leaders took the time to really get to know the needs and expectations of their people.

“My leader saw and brought out the best in me. He made me feel I was an important part of the team. Our team had incredible camaraderie, and a lot had to do with the way my supervisor created a trusting and warm environment. Everyone felt safe enough to be themselves and talk about their feelings. If we were having problems, he took the time to work with us on the side.”

“It was a small job to get me through school, but it gave me a sense that I wasn’t there just to punch a clock. It felt like I was doing something good for my employer, that I was making a difference—in a small way, especially for people who were slammed already with lots of work. I was making an impact for them and making their lives easier. They trusted me and that meant a lot.”

“One of the best things my boss said was that he wanted me to be a partner, not an assistant. I was blown away—I didn’t think I was competent or capable of being his partner. I really felt empowered by that. He gave me total control to run the unit.”

“My boss and I had a partnership and she really believed in my personal and professional abilities. She saw the potential in me. She saw strengths that I didn’t even see in myself. She helped me develop that.”

“I met with my manager a few times a week to touch base. He always said we were not meeting as boss and subordinate, but as colleagues. He always asked for my opinion on different projects. He gave me a lot of confidence and encouraged me to grow and take on new tasks.”

Research Findings

Effective leaders also gave constant feedback and took the time to really get to know the needs and expectations of their people, which increased trust and openness in their relationships. These leaders had the courage to admit to mistakes and doubts, to take risks, to listen, and to trust and learn from others, as illustrated in the following examples ▶

Many respondents said their leader made them feel like a partner, not a subordinate ...

A third key component that was frequently mentioned was the leader's ability to show genuine appreciation for their people. People felt valued and respected for their contributions to the organization's success. The following examples illustrate how leaders found ways to get to know their people at both a personal and professional level, and what motivated them ▶

Feeling valued, appreciated, and respected was especially important for Generation X individuals. This is not unusual coming from a generation that values independence and individuality more so than other generations. With so many of their mothers working, they became the first generation to be left on their own for a good part of childhood. They may not show much loyalty to the company they work for, but they tend to be very loyal to individual coworkers, friends, and family.

In general, respondents of both genders—across all generations and temperaments—placed high importance on being treated equally and valued. The majority of respondents reported a desire for trust, respect, and appreciation. The research also suggested that women tended to favor leaders who supported and encouraged them, more so than men. Another key difference between genders was that men favored an interactive and engaging environment, compared with women who preferred an open and safe environment.

▶ *"My supervisor expressed trust and confidence in my ability. He spent time with me on both professional issues and personal issues—a healthy amount that makes you want to serve well. He gave me honest feedback and used my strengths. He also wasn't afraid to admit his own faults and asked for my help in those areas."*

"We had weekly one-on-one meetings to address ongoing issues. We also put systems in place to make our communication better. She helped me to make my job better and more efficient. It wasn't always that way. I brought that to her attention and she respected me for that."

▶ *"My supervisor always found ways to reward me that really mattered to me. For example, she always asked what would mean a lot for me if we hit our goals. During a particular project, I told her that my family and I had been planning a trip to Legoland, but had never found time to go. So, when we hit our goal, I got a gift card to Legoland along with park tickets. My rewards were always meaningful."*

"My supervisor would take the time to acknowledge our team's work publicly and give positive feedback. For example, she would acknowledge the contributions of others in staff meetings. We also had luncheons to appreciate the staff for their progress and efforts. She gave us the freedom to do whatever we had to do without feeling micromanaged or controlled."

"My boss would praise us all the time, but I never understood the importance of what that meant. He would tell me, 'Cassie, I want to talk to you.' And I would think, 'Oh no, what did I do wrong?' But he would just tell me, 'Cassie, I just want to tell you what a great job you're doing and that I'm glad to have you on my team.' That really made me feel special!"

What were the leader's characteristics?

The research suggested that the quality and caliber of the manager were important factors in creating a favorable experience. The majority of respondents interviewed mentioned “personable” as an important leadership quality. Being nice, friendly, and caring were also commonly mentioned. The second characteristic that ranked high was having a leader who was fun and easygoing. Respondents enjoyed leaders who made them feel comfortable, had a sense of humor, and made the job fun. Finally, a leader who was knowledgeable and competent ranked third as a top leader characteristic. Respondents resonated highly with a leader who demonstrated knowledge and expertise in his or her particular field. The exception to this were people with the NF temperament, who favored a boss who was accessible and approachable much more than the other temperament types. This is not unusual, as NFs tend to be very people-oriented and gifted at helping others.

Based on the research findings, several conclusions can be made. First, it appears that leadership is more than a set of skills; it consists of a number of subtle personal qualities that are hard to see, but are very powerful. These include qualities such as enthusiasm, integrity, courage, and humility. The data suggests that good leaders demonstrated a sincere interest in their people, making them feel valued, respected, and cared for. They had a heart for people and portrayed a value set that held a high regard for the dignity of others and the building of relationships. The following examples demonstrate these values ▶

Good leaders not only loved what they were doing but wanted to share their enthusiasm with others. They were emotionally connected to others and inspired them to become part of a community that was contributing to something worthwhile. In general, these leaders tended to have open minds that welcomed new ideas rather than closed minds that criticized new ideas. They tended to care about others and built personal connections versus maintaining emotional distance. The following example makes this point ▶

“My boss is a caring and compassionate person, always looking for the good in people. We work great as a team because we trust one another and work off of one another's strengths. She's not afraid to admit she doesn't have all the answers, and values what I bring to the table. She's also an avid learner, always looking for new ideas and ways to improve what we do—which has rubbed off on me. I really appreciate that trait about her.”

“My leader acted more as my friend than a boss. She helped me see that my background was actually good and that my weakness was really a strength. Also, she knew what she was talking about—I trusted her word. She was out for the company's and my best interest, so it was both about developing me and the company.”

My leader influenced me at a personal level because he was a spiritual man. But he didn't use his faith to motivate me. It was more than just winning a championship or putting together a good team. He was adamant about developing good young men. I would use these skills throughout my life—disciplines and challenges we went through together. I didn't get it then, but it is now part of my total character.

Research Findings

Second, the majority of respondents, especially the younger generations, mentioned a leader who was fun and easygoing. People enjoyed having a boss who was down to earth, had a sense of humor, and made the workplace environment comfortable for others. These leaders demonstrated a high level of sociability. Sociability can be defined as a leader's inclination to seek out pleasant social relationships, such as being friendly, outgoing, courteous, and tactful. Humor and fun, however, were also balanced with seriousness and firmness. Leaders took their jobs seriously but made the environment fun and engaging.

Third, in addition to preferring leaders who are personable, fun, and easygoing, respondents favored leaders who demonstrated a high level of knowledge and proficiency in their area of expertise or field. Knowledgeable and competent ranked especially high for Baby Boomers compared to the younger population. A possibility is that Boomers, who have accumulated a tremendous amount of work experience over the years, may have higher expectations regarding their bosses' knowledge, expertise, and background, and this is reflected in the kind of leader they prefer.

What were the leader's beliefs?

The descriptors in this category appeared to be similar and interchangeable, such as "believed I was capable," "believed I had potential," and "believed I could succeed." There was general agreement among all the groups that the leaders' beliefs about their people's capabilities and competencies were a major contributor to the respondents' success. Effective leaders encouraged their people to believe in themselves, their work roles, and their contributions, which inspired the respondents to want to try harder. This may be explained, at least in part, by a self-fulfilling prophecy instilled by the leader.

Building trust and respect was foundational for encouraging individuals to live up to their leader's expectations. Many respondents expressed that they did not want to let their bosses down. As a result, many individuals remarked that they exceeded in meeting their goals, gained confidence in their abilities, and set higher standards for themselves, which was reflected in behaviors they adopted later in life. The following illustrates this point ▶

"My leader opened a whole new world for me. I was on a good career path. Whether it was right or not, I believed it was good enough. But my boss shattered that. He asked the right questions. However you are spending your life—it is your life. All is integrated—life and work."

"My supervisor challenged me to the edge and made me realize I could do more. He trusted in me and believed I possessed the capacity and ability to learn. It made me want to do more."

"My boss helped me to realize that I had more potential than I initially thought. She taught me that you can keep pushing toward your potential. Looking back now, the guidance she gave me influenced the qualities I have today."

What was the impact of the experience?

The research showed that respondents learned a great deal from the experience of working for a good leader. It appears that people who remember a powerful experience model that behavior later in their lives. Also, many respondents mentioned that the experience helped them grow and build their confidence. For many, it was a life-changing experience. For instance, the SJ and SP temperament type groups ranked “the experience changed my life” at the top of the list.

In general, the survey revealed that men were more results-oriented and career-focused than women. For example, comments from men included: “Taught me hands-on experience,” “Taught me interpersonal skills and how to get the job done,” and “Taught me there is a system to doing something and if you get stuck, you can create your own opportunities.”

How would you characterize your relationships with others?

After reviewing the data, this component did not appear to be a good measurement and was eliminated from the final analysis.

People enjoyed having a boss who was down to earth, had a sense of humor, and made the workplace environment comfortable for others.

Other Key Findings

An important key finding in the study was the leader’s ability to recognize and understand the needs of their people and respond accordingly. The research suggests that effective leaders were good listeners and were able to provide what their people wanted and needed as illustrated in the following comment ▶

Effective leaders encouraged their people to believe in themselves,

▶ *“My boss immediately took me under her wing and taught me everything she knew. She just knew how I learned best. She wouldn’t always give me the answers but allowed me to question her thinking and ask questions. She took what I did, then provided input on how to improve. I needed someone to give me direction, and she created just enough structure to give me what I*

Many female leaders were often described as being more willing to share power and information, to encourage employee development, and to strive to enhance others’ feelings of self-worth. One female respondent commented ▶

Effective leaders were good listeners.

▶ *“My boss didn’t try to fit me into a mold but gave me what I needed. She really listened to my needs and gave me the autonomy to do it my way, then supported me if I needed help. She was very encouraging and open-minded.”*

Another interesting observation of an effective leader was the leader’s ability to manage or balance opposing views or polarities when confronted with an employee problem or situation that required more of a “both/and” answer than an “either/or” answer solution. Leaders were able to see the whole picture and balance these polarities depending on the situation or the person’s needs, such as providing structure and flexibility, discipline and freedom, support and direction, firmness and compassion, or seriousness and fun. The following examples demonstrate this ▶

▶ *“My leader provided me with lots of autonomy and freedom, but held me accountable.”*

“My manager gave me latitude to do the job, but created a clear vision of what to do.”

“The leader structured the environment to achieve goals, but gave us the autonomy to express ourselves.”

▶ *“My manager gave me both freedom and guidance.”*

“My leader was laid back but fast paced.”

“The leader was organized and structured, but provided autonomy to experiment.”

In addition, respondents of the SP temperament ranked role model and/or mentor as a key leader characteristic more often than did the other temperament types. This may be partially explained by the SP's natural ability to trust his or her abilities, seek stimulation, and take action. A person with the SP temperament may therefore want a boss who will provide direction and knowledge to help him or her succeed.

Finally, the research looked for differences and similarities between how men and women viewed their leader's effectiveness. However, the findings showed that most differences were related to generation and temperament type rather than to gender. This may be an interesting factor to consider when trying to understand and create an optimal workplace environment for a diverse population.

Values such as inclusion, relationship building, and caring are generally considered "feminine" values, yet the men and the women in this study equally favored these values. For example, the research showed that both genders rated a personable leader very high. But, in general, there was a slight difference: women favored having a good role model and/or mentor, while men liked having a fun and easygoing boss. An explanation for both preferences may be that today's organizations are adopting team-based structures that require more collaborative and inclusive approaches, leading both men and women to place high importance on effectively building relationships.

Effective leaders were able to see the whole picture and balance the opposing polarities depending on the situation or the person's needs.

Conclusion

This study explored the key elements that comprise an energizing and productive work environment in which people flourish and become magnificent. The research showed that regardless of generation, gender, or temperament, most people desire an open, safe, and welcoming environment in which they are challenged and encouraged to stretch beyond their comfort zone, grow, and learn. People also enjoy an environment that encourages participation, collaboration, sharing, and a sense of community.

Leaders play an important role in influencing a positive workplace. The research suggests that leaders created a supportive and encouraging environment by providing their people an opportunity to expand their minds and abilities, to assume responsibility for their own actions, and to find innovative ways to do their work. Leaders who paid attention to building relationships and genuinely cared about their people, as individuals and as workers, earned the trust and respect of others. They promoted openness and honesty and a sense of belonging that captured the hearts and minds of their people.

The study also found that effective leaders were personable, easygoing, and genuinely enjoyed people. They demonstrated a sincere interest in their people, making them feel valued, respected, and cared for. Good leaders were passionate and knowledgeable about their work and shared that enthusiasm with others. They were emotionally connected to others and inspired them to become part of the team and do meaningful work. They encouraged their people to believe in themselves, their work roles, and their contributions, which motivated them to push harder. As a result, people modeled that behavior later in their lives.

Across age, generations, and gender, employees seek a workplace where they are respected and valued, and have an opportunity to participate and contribute their talents and experience. Today, an organization's success depends on the collective wisdom of all its employees. The leader's job is to guide these workers to use their collective power effectively and to build and sustain a motivating work environment.

Most people desire an open, safe, and welcoming environment in which they are encouraged to stretch and grow.

Building and Sustaining a Successful Workplace Environment

Today, an organization's success depends on the collective wisdom of all its employees. Leaders play an important role in guiding workers to use their collective power effectively and in developing an environment that fosters trust and respect. Following are ten strategies leaders can employ to make a positive difference in their organizations.

1. **Create trust.** Encourage open communication by openly sharing information and knowledge. Show vulnerability by being honest and admitting mistakes. Encourage others to share their thoughts and feelings.
2. **Communicate and listen.** Listen far more than you speak. Find out what is in the minds and hearts of your people. Ask for their suggestions and opinions on their work.
3. **Give feedback.** Establish specific performance standards, set goals, set deadlines, and communicate these expectations regularly. Take time to give honest feedback. Encourage people to stretch and take risks.
4. **Give recognition and praise.** Be free with recognition and praise people for good performance. Show appreciation by giving additional responsibility and authority, and room to grow.
5. **Practice being a situational leader.** Diagnose and respond to the needs of individuals, groups, and teams by providing direction, information, resources, and training as needed.
6. **Introduce new learning opportunities.** Provide ongoing training and development for both content and/or technical skills and soft skills. Give people tough jobs and tasks that expand their skills, and assignments that demand creativity. Encourage and challenge them to take risks and step outside their comfort zone.
7. **Conduct regular one-on-one meetings.** Do not underestimate the power of supporting an employee or learner to share his or her truth. Find out what is really important to him or her to make him or her feel special and heard. It allows you to learn what is important to that person and ultimately to you.
8. **Charter the team or department.** Charter the group or team, including defining the purpose, goals and objectives, norms for operating together, and how to hold people accountable. Without this solid foundation, any group can flounder.
9. **Process all meetings.** At the end of every meeting, spend a few minutes to process what went well, what didn't go well, and what could be done differently. This is a simple improvement tool that helps people work together more effectively. A process observer can be appointed to observe during the meeting and call time out if people are violating the team's norms.
10. **Share information and knowledge.** Support and encourage knowledge and information sharing. Conduct monthly chats, establish Web sites, or form communities of practice to keep people informed. Reward and recognize behaviors that support and encourage knowledge and information sharing.

Appendix I

The following is a summary of the categories identified for each question asked.

1. *What made the environment special?*

Major categories identified by respondents included:

- Was open and safe (supportive, caring, friendly, relaxed, and fun)
- Was interactive and engaging (experimental energizing; teamwork)
- Was challenging (had responsibility, encouraged creativity and competition, could push the envelope)
- Had autonomy (freedom to learn in own way, flexibility to do work)
- Involved teamwork (liked people, small class, lots of feedback)
- Was treated equally (felt trusted, respected, and valued)
- Was inspiring and motivating (had a vision and guidance from a good role model and/or mentor)

2. *What did the leader do to create the environment?*

The top categories identified were:

- Made experience challenging (gave responsibility to do work and stretched to do more)
- Created an open and safe environment (positive, relaxed, friendly, and fun)

- Provided a supportive environment (had availability to resources; directed and guided; provided one-on-one attention; provided good communication, had open-door policy)
- Encouraged autonomy (empowered and provided flexibility to do work; not micromanaged)
- Created interactive and engaging atmosphere (teamwork, positive and negative feedback, energetic and positive climate, collaboration and sharing)
- Created trust and respect (treated equally, valued, respected, and appreciated)
- Provided behaviors of exemplary role model (leader had passion in subject and/or work; was a visionary, inspiring, and motivating)

3. *What were the leader's characteristics?*

The top 10 characteristics were mentioned:

- Personable
- Fun and easygoing
- Knowledgeable
- Accessible and approachable
- Role model and/or mentor
- Communicator and listener
- Encouraging and supportive
- Intelligent
- Honest and trustworthy
- Disciplined and serious

4. *What were the leader's beliefs?*

The five most common beliefs appear to be very similar in nature and are interchangeable. Commonly made remarks included:

- Leader believed I was capable.
- Leader had confidence in me.
- Leader believed I could succeed.
- Leader had high expectations of me.
- Leader believed I had potential.

- Felt a sense of family
- Team spirit
- Little or no impact on relationships

5. *What was the impact of the experience?*

Respondents mentioned seven things that impacted them the most, which appear to be interchangeable. Commonly made remarks included:

- I did a good job or received a good grade.
- The leader motivated me to pursue more.
- I learned a lot.
- It built my confidence.
- It changed my life.
- It made me set higher expectations for myself.
- I role modeled the experience later in life.

6. *How would you characterize relationships with others?*

The primary descriptors identified were the following:

- Had good relationships
- Made good friends

Appendix II

The following is a summary of final results of the top categories identified across all groups (generation, gender, and temperament type).

1. What made the environment special?

Rank	Number of Responses	Response
1	96	Open and safe
2	72	Challenging
3	55	Interactive and engaging
4	49	Teamwork, team spirit
5	43	Autonomy
6	16	Inspiring and motivating

2. What did the leader do to create the environment?

Rank	Number of Responses	Response
1	267	Supportive
2	130	Interactive and engaging
2	130	Being respected and valued
3	122	Open and safe
4	94	Encouraged autonomy
5	82	Role model/mentor
6	69	Challenging

3. What were the leader's characteristics?

Rank	Number of Responses	Response
1	165	Personable
2	110	Fun and easygoing
3	93	Knowledgeable
4	76	Accessible and approachable
5	72	Role model and/or mentor
6	57	Communicator and listener
7	55	Encouraging and supportive
8	44	Intelligent
9	42	Honest and trustworthy
10	41	Disciplined and serious
11	38	Inspiring and motivating
12	35	Energetic
13	35	Passionate about subject/work
14	33	Positive and optimistic
15	20	Patient and calm

Responses to three of the following interview questions are not divided by descriptors:

1. *What were the leader's beliefs?*

The descriptors identified in this category appeared to be interchangeable and the remarks made were very similar therefore were not ranked ordered.

2. *What was the impact of the experience?*

The descriptors identified in this category appeared to be interchangeable and very similar and also were not ranked ordered.

3. *How would you characterize relationships with others?*

This component did not appear to be a good measurement of the leader's effectiveness and was eliminated from the final analysis.

Appendix III

1. What made the environment special?

Generation	Rank	Number of Responses	Response
Baby Boomers	1	36	Open and safe
	2	21	Interactive and engaging
	3	19	Challenging
	4	18	Teamwork
	5	15	Inspiring and motivating
Generation X	1	34	Challenging
	2	26	Open and safe
	3	15	Teamwork
	4	13	Interactive and engaging
	5	10	Autonomy
Generation Y	1	34	Open and safe
	2	21	Interactive and engaging
	3	21	Autonomy
	4	19	Challenging
	5	16	Teamwork

2. What did the leader do to create the environment?

Generation	Rank	Number of Responses	Response
Baby Boomers	1	65	Supportive
	2	32	Interactive and engaging
	3	26	Open and safe
	4	24	Autonomy
	5	23	Respected and valued
	6	19	Challenging
	7	16	Role model and/or mentor
Generation X	1	127	Supportive
	2	67	Respected and valued
	3	54	Open and safe
	4	54	Interactive and engaging
	5	46	Autonomy
	6	40	Role model and/or mentor
	7	26	Challenging
Generation Y	1	75	Supportive
	2	44	Interactive and engaging
	3	42	Open and safe
	4	30	Respected and valued
	5	26	Role mode and/or mentor
	6	24	Challenging
	7	24	Autonomy

3. What were the leader's characteristics?

Generation	Rank	Number of Responses	Response
Baby Boomers	1	63	Personable
	2	40	Knowledgeable
	3	29	Fun and easygoing
	4	22	Role model and/or mentor
	5	20	Intelligent
	6	20	Accessible and approachable
Generation X	1	55	Personable
	2	43	Fun and easygoing
	3	32	Knowledgeable
	4	26	Role model and/or mentor
	5	22	Accessible and approachable
	6	20	Encouraging and supportive
Generation Y	1	47	Personable
	2	38	Fun and easygoing
	3	34	Accessible and approachable
	4	24	Role model and/or mentor
	5	21	Knowledgeable
	6	20	Communicator and listener

Appendix IV

The following is a summary of final results of the top categories identified by the four temperament types.

1. What made the environment special?

Temperament Type	Rank	Number of Responses	Response
NT	1	29	Open and safe
	2	18	Challenging
	3	14	Interactive and engaging
	4	10	Inspiring and motivating
NF	1	37	Open and safe
	2	21	Challenging
	3	12	Teamwork
	4	07	Treated equally
SJ	1	23	Teamwork
	2	17	Challenging
	3	16	Open and safe
	4	14	Interactive and engaging
SP	1	28	Open and safe
	2	22	Interactive and engaging
	3	16	Challenging
	4	12	Autonomy

2. What did the leader do to create the environment?

Temperament Type	Rank	Number of Responses	Response
NT	1	68	Supportive
	2	36	Autonomy
	3	32	Respected and valued
	4	31	Interactive and engaging
	5	27	Open and safe
NF	1	49	Supportive
	2	37	Open and safe
	3	32	Interactive and engaging
	4	29	Respected and valued
	5	23	Role model and/or mentor
SJ	1	46	Supportive
	2	34	Interactive and engaging
	3	29	Open and safe
	4	27	Respected and valued
	5	23	Autonomy
SP	1	87	Supportive
	2	42	Respected and valued
	3	34	Interactive and engaging
	4	29	Open and safe
	5	29	Autonomy

3. What were the leader's characteristics?

Temperament Type	Rank	Number of Responses	Response
NT	1	32	Fun and easygoing
	2	26	Personable
	3	23	Knowledgeable
	4	18	Encouraging and supportive
	5	18	Role model and/or mentor
	6	17	Accessible and approachable
NF	1	44	Personable
	2	24	Accessible and approachable
	3	21	Fun and easygoing
	4	20	Knowledgeable
	5	20	Communicator and listener
	6	15	Positive and optimistic
SJ	1	41	Personable
	2	22	Fun and easygoing
	3	22	Knowledgeable
	4	17	Accessible and approachable
	5	16	Communicator and listener
	6	16	Encouraging and supportive
SP	1	54	Personable
	2	35	Fun and easygoing
	3	28	Knowledgeable
	4	25	Role model and/or mentor
	5	20	Disciplined and serious
	6	18	Accessible and approachable

Appendix V

The following is a summary of final results of the top categories identified by gender.

1. What made the environment special?

Gender	Rank	Number of Responses	Response
Women	1	49	Open and safe
	2	27	Challenging
	3	22	Interactive and engaging
	4	22	Autonomy
Men	1	56	Open and safe
	2	45	Challenging
	3	33	Interactive and engaging
	4	31	Teamwork

2. What did the leader do to create the environment?

Gender	Rank	Number of Responses	Response
Women	1	150	Supportive
	2	60	Open and safe
	3	55	Respected and valued
	4	51	Interactive and engaging
	5	46	Autonomy
	6	38	Challenging
	7	36	Role model and/or mentor
Men	1	117	Supportive
	2	79	Interactive and engaging
	3	75	Respected and valued
	4	62	Open and safe
	5	48	Autonomy
	6	46	Role model and/or mentor
	7	31	Challenging

3. What were the leader's characteristics?

Gender	Rank	Number of Responses	Response
Women	1	89	Personable
	2	47	Role model and/or mentor
	3	45	Fun and easygoing
	4	44	Knowledgeable
	5	43	Accessible and approachable
	6	35	Encouraging and supportive
	7	34	Communicator and listener
Men	1	76	Personable
	2	65	Fun and easygoing
	3	49	Knowledgeable
	4	33	Accessible and approachable
	5	28	Disciplined and serious
	6	25	Role model and/or mentor
	7	23	Communicator and listener

Appendix VI

The temperament theory is widely used in connection with the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator®. “Temperament” describes four broad patterns of interrelated characteristics. There are four variations of each temperament pattern, each represented by one of the 16 types. Following are the four types used in this research:

1. NF “idealists”: Seek identity and meaning; value emphatic, meaningful relationships; want to make the world a better place; trust their intuition and imagination; think in terms of integration and similarities; want to be authentic.
2. NT “rationals”: Theory oriented; seek to understand the principles on which the world and things in it work; trust logic and reason; skeptical and precise; think in terms of differences, categories, definitions, and structures; want competence and knowledge.
3. SP “artisans”: Action and impact oriented; want spontaneity; are optimistic; trust luck and ability to handle spur of the moment; absorbed in the moment; read people and situations and adapt to changes to get the job done; seek adventure and experiences; want freedom to choose.
4. SJ “guardians”: Want responsibility and predictability; like guidelines and procedures to protect and preserve; serious and concerned; trust the past, tradition, and authority; think in terms of comparisons, sequences, and associations; want security, stability, and to belong.

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