

# **Alternating Leadership as a Proactive Organizational Intervention: Addressing the Needs of the Baby Boomers, Generation Xers and Millennials**

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*The article examines traditional leadership research and assumption concerning hierarchical and leader-focused paradigms against the needs of the Baby Boomers, Generation Xers and Millennials who favor a spontaneous, self-initiated leadership/followership theory identified as Alternating Leadership - that acknowledges the duality of leader/follower within each individual. A matrix offers interventions that enhance and expand leadership and followership roles and generational expectations. Conclusions suggest a confirmation of the dual Alternating Leadership role existing within all employees or managers and range of worker-centered, real-time interventions needed to increase worker interaction and synergy.*

## **THE SUBTLE ROLE OF THE EMPLOYEE AS ALTERNATING LEADER**

### **Introduction**

Great outcomes within organizations are not the result of someone working alone but the synergy of interrelationships with the thoughts, ideas, and the actions of many. Administration and management can increase the organization's value when they support the spontaneous behaviors of *Alternating Leadership* within and among the ranks, and increase the facilitated real-time opportunities present within any organizational environment. *Alternating Leadership* challenges the traditional understandings of unidirectional, hierarchical leadership and replaces it with a fluid, inclusive, interactive, and synergistic understanding of leadership and followership as a dynamic dual-role present throughout the workforce.

Much leadership research seems to have gone astray in leader glorification, as in the case of Charismatic Leadership and Transformational Leadership models, as well as the role and power of the leader *over* the follower (Bass, 1990; Bryman, 1992; Northouse, 2001). Recent developments have shown the importance of measured, reasoned, principled and long-term organizational administrative strategies that release the workforce talent and expand synergies. Making celebrities out of highly compensated administrators and CEOs has not typically served the whole organization in the long term. It unfairly fosters a belief that organizational greatness is the work and product of a single individual at the top of the pyramid. A concept not supported by research.

As the current four-generational workforce becomes a more youthful three-generational workforce, holding a controlled-collaboration, hierarchal focus as dominate will most likely lead to organizational strife. Instead, organizations need inclusive, innovative and dynamic workplace possibilities (Deal, 2007; Winzenburg & Magnus, 2007; Houlihan, 2007; Williams, 2007; Dwyer, 2009; Frandsen, 2009; Salahuddin, 2010). Successful model of interactive organizations, expanding worker synergies are present in such new-generational firms as: Zappos<sup>1</sup>, Google<sup>2</sup> and Facebook<sup>3</sup>.

The first purpose of this paper is to refocus the definition of leadership or leading behaviors as an ad hoc and voluntary relationship or linkage between two or more individuals that result in synergistic outcomes. Further, the focus is to explore the duality of individual behavior to express both leader and follower behavior at will. As such, leader/follower and leading/following behaviors exist at all levels of the organization and transcend the traditional hierarchical and mechanistic managerial roles. Alternating Leadership emerges from the interconnections of employees' collective knowledge, skills, and abilities (Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp, & Gilson, 2008). Equally important is the mutual self-selection when a person or worker actively engages in the leader or follower role as desired as a means of social learning (Kragness, 1994).

The second purpose of this paper is to address the distinctive differences and positive impact Alternating Leadership can offer to the new generational workers. The paper offers recommendations for administrative acknowledgement and attentiveness concerning workplace interventions and surrounding norms that can expand work relationships and interactivity. By understanding the positive impact of Alternating Leadership within the organization, Administration with Board approval, can transform pay packages leading to much needed and long overdue reforms that minimize the unsightly blemishes of excessive CEO compensation with limited regard for the contribution of the whole organization.

### **The Traditional Research of Leadership**

“Most leadership studies have explored only the positive relationships and outcomes of leader actions, ignoring those behaviors that may be harmful to subordinates and organizations... Little investigation has occurred concerning of leader errors and how those errors impact organizational success or failure (Hunter, Bedell-Avers and Mumford, 2007). The fall of Enron and the sequence of cascading corporate mishaps including the recent failure of the financial industry and resultant financial markets now challenge the research assumptions about the positivity of leadership and refocus the world to ask what happens when leadership is without balance.

The traditional view of leadership is offered by Stogdill's original summative review of leadership research, as offered in the “Handbook of Leadership.” A review of the meta analysis labeled the leader as *the focus of the group process, activity, and change* (Bass, 1981). The traditional assumption considered the leader as: the *nucleus* of all social movements; in *preeminence* of a few people; *central* to the efforts and the *expressions of the power* of all; influenced by the needs and wishes of the group yet in *control* of the activity; in a position of *high potential*; as the *primary agent*; and a person *one pace ahead of the group* (Bass, 1981). The patterns of the italicized words frame the elite nature of the view of leadership and the leader.

Stogdill's summative work frames the traditional leadership assumptions and beliefs to consider:

- ◆ Leadership is hierarchal based and linked to office.
- ◆ Leadership occurs when leaders do things to followers.
- ◆ Leadership makes a crucial difference to organizational performance.
- ◆ Leadership resides in individuals rather than the system.
- ◆ Leaders as differ from other people. (Bass, 1981)

Though leadership is a sophisticated concept, the foundation of leadership research is preoccupied with leadership as headship and grounded in positional understandings and ideals as head of state, military commander, princeps, proconsul, chief and king (Bass, 1981).

There are as many definitions of leader, leading and leadership as people attempting to define it. Stogdill's (Bass, 1981) meta-analysis of early leadership research outlines the research patterns into discrete categories of commonality that included: leadership as a *group process*; leadership as *personality and its effect*; leadership as the *art of inducing compliance*; leadership as the *exercise of influence*; leadership as an *act or behavior*; leadership as a *form of persuasion*; leadership as a *power relation*; leadership as an instrument of *goal achievement*; leadership as an *emerging interaction*; leadership as the *initiation of structure* and leadership as a *different role*. Each of these research domains exploited the basic assumptions of the leader paradigm as:

Leader as the *nucleus* of all social movements;  
Leadership in preeminence of a *few people*;  
*Centralization* of effort as an expression of the power of all;  
Influenced by the needs and wishes of the group;  
The central focus of activity;  
A position of *high potential*;  
A *primary agent*;  
A person *one pace ahead* of the group. (Bass, 1981)

Leadership as a **group process** research includes Cooley (1902) who maintains that “the leader is always the nucleus of a tendency.” Balckmar (1991) “saw leadership as the ‘centralization of effort in one person as an expression of the power of all.’” For Redl (1942) “the leader is a central focal person who integrates the group.” Brown (1936) states “the leader may not be separate from the group, but may be treated as a position of high potential in the field.” And, similarly, Smith (1934) expressed his belief that the group exists of two separate parts and that the leader occupied the “central focal activity, and the individuals [of the group]...act with regard to the center.” This body of research placed the leader in a central and primary agent role thus diminishing the role of the general membership of any working group (Bass, 1981).

Leadership as **personality and its effect** research sought to explain why some people are better able to exercise or express a leadership personality and it holds a bias that leaders possesses the greatest number of desirable traits of personality and character. This area of research holds that a leader is a person ordinarily efficient in carrying *psychological stimuli* to others; that the leader holds a combination of traits that enable the individual to *induce others to accomplish a given task*; and regards leadership as a *one-way influence* effect. In general, and inconclusive, trait leadership research seeks to validate that Personality traits such as ascendancy or social boldness go hand-in-hand with being esteemed and attaining leadership. The researchers in this timeframe included: Bingham (1927), Bernard (1926), Bogardus (1928), Tead (1929), through to Stark (1977) whose work focused on the hero’s personality that “makes possible enormous feats of leadership” (Bass, 1981, p. 9).

Leadership as the **art of inducing compliance** foci is the role between the leader, the follower and social control. The major researchers offered by Stogdill included: Munson (1921) who defines leadership as “the ability to handle men so as to achieve the most with the least friction and the greatest cooperation ... Leadership is the creative and directive force of morale.” As well as, Bennis (1959) whose proposition is that “leadership can be defined as the process by which the agent induces a subordinate to behave in a desired manner.” Further, Moore (1972) states his position on leadership as “the ability to impress the will of the leader on those led and induce obedience, respect, loyalty, and cooperation.” Compliance leadership research seeks to define leadership as the effects of inducing compliance, ethics and moral action, which has a weakness when leadership is expressed in the public domain where variations of these areas is prolific. This body of research considered leadership unidirectional and authoritative in nature (Bass, 1981, 9).

Similar to *leadership as the art of inducing compliance* is *leadership as the exercise of influence*, which researches leadership as it related to influencing change. Major leadership and influence researchers include Nash (1929) who suggests, “Leadership implies influencing change in the conduct of others.” Tead (1935) defines it as “the activity of influencing change in the conduct of others.” Haiman (1951) states “direct leadership is an interaction process in which an individual, usually through the medium of speech, influences the behavior of others toward a particular end.” Bass (1960) noted the “effort to change the behavior of others is *attempted* leadership. When the others actually change, this creation of change in others is successful leadership. If the others are reinforced or rewarded for changing their behavior, this evoked achievement is *effective* leadership. As we left the fifties leadership on influence began to expand towards a systems approach and Katz and Kahn (1966) observed that, although supervisors at the same level of organizational process possess equal power, they do not use it with equal effect to influence individuals and the organization” (Bass, 1981, pp. 9-10).

Leadership as an **act or specific behavior** researched the particular behavior of the leader in an interactive process. Major researchers included, Hemphill (1949) who suggests, “Leadership may [be] defined as the behavior of an individual while he is involved in directing group activities.” Carter (1953) believed “leadership behaviors are any behaviors the experimenter wishes to designate or, more generally, any behavior which experts in this area wish to consider as leadership behaviors.” As research nears the seventies, Fiedler (1967) expanded the leader’s behavioral focus and defined leadership “By leadership behavior we generally means the particular act in which a leader engages in the course of directing and coordinating the work of his group members.” This research was more general and interactive in nature (Bass, 1981).

An additional leadership research focus included **persuasion** as a central theme of the resultant leadership. Here Stogdill’s major researchers include, Schenk (1928) who suggests, “Leadership is the management of men by persuasion and inspiration rather than by direct or implied threat of coercion.” Cleeton and Mason (1934) stated that “leadership indicates the ability to influence men and secure results through emotional appeals rather than through the exercise of authority.” Copeland (1942) states “Leadership is the art of dealing with human nature.” Odier (1948) differentiated between the value and the valence of a leader. This area of research attempted to mitigate the effects of coercion as it related to the leader and leadership (Bass, 1981, pp. 10-11).

As Stogdill moved into the late fifties and sixties, traditional research looked at the relationship between **power and leadership** (Bass, 1981). In this timeframe, researchers experienced the impact of the end of the world wars and the entrance of the returning military to the workplace. Though the notion of authoritarian leadership was generally rejected, research explored the relationship between power and leading. One of the better known theories is offered by French and Raven (1958) who enduringly defined leadership in terms of differential power relationships among members of a group, identifying and categorizing five power sources, including:

- Referent power (liking)
- Expert power
- Reward power
- Coercive power
- Legitimate power

Warraine (1955) explored “leadership as a form of power – one or several acts in conformance with the request of another.” Smith (1948) equates leadership with control over the interaction process. The sixties researchers explored the function of power as well as the relationship of the power. Bass (1960) defined the relationship as, “when the goal of one member, A, is that of changing another, B, or when B’s change in behavior will reward A or reinforce A’s behavior, A’s effort to obtain the goal is leadership” (p. 11).

While some researchers focus on persuasion, power, influence and specific leader behavior, alternate researchers studied leadership as an instrument of **goal achievement** and initiation of structure. Major researchers in the area of goal achievement included: Cowley (1928) who states, “a leader is a person who has a program and is moving toward an objective with his group in a definite manner.” Davis, R.C. (1942) research offers “the principal dynamic force that stimulates, motivates, and coordinates the organization in the accomplishment of its objective.” Bellows (1959) states that “the process of arranging a situation so that various members of the group, including the leader, can achieve common goals with maximum economy and a minimum of time and work.” In addition, Davis, K. (1962) states that “the human factor which binds a group together and motivates it towards goals.”

Leadership as the **initiation of structure** also emerged during the fifties, researching the interaction between variables about the management of social differentials, group interaction and resultant structuring. Jennings (1944) states that “leadership thus appears as a manner of interaction involving behavior by and towards the individual “lifted” to a leader role by other individuals.” Gibb (1954) regarded group leadership as a position emerging from the interaction between a person and a group. Sherif and Sherif (1956) suggests that leadership is a role within the scheme of relations and defined by

reciprocal expectations between the leader and other members. Newcomb, Turner and Converse (1965) observed that members of the group make different contributions to goal achievement, Insofar as any member is seen as indispensable, they may be regarded as leader-like.

The foundational and traditional researchers laid the groundwork for the study of leadership as an emerging **effect of interaction**. Bogardus (1929) defines leadership “as a social process, leadership is that social interstimulation which causes a number of people to set out towards an old goal with new zest or a new goal with hopeful courage – with different people keeping different places.” Pigors (1935) offers that “leadership is a process of mutual stimulation which, by the successful interplay of individual differences, controls human energy in the pursuit of a common cause...”, while Cattell (1951) defines a leader as “a person who produces group syntality different from that which would have existed had he not been present in the group.” For Merton (1969), it was “an interpersonal relation in which others comply because they want to, not because they have to.” Emergent interaction research is the groundwork for *alternating leadership* as a relationship between people and the duality of the roles each plays.

Finally, the foundational leadership research shifted towards an understanding of the leader as a **different role**. Starting as early as the 1940s, researchers considered the impact on the individual through interactions with others. Jenning (1944) states “leadership thus appears as a manner of interaction involving behavior by and towards the individual “lifted” to a leader role by other individuals.” Gibb (1954) regarded group leadership as a position emerging from the interaction between a person and a group. Sherif and Sherif (1956) suggests that leadership is a role within the scheme of relations and defines itself by reciprocal expectations between the leader and other members. Newcomb, Turner and Converse (1965) observed that members of the group make different contributions to goal achievement but leader-like behavior involves being viewed as indispensable.

Both pre-and post-war, and early 1900’s research, framed leadership in a mechanistic manner embedding Fayol’s elements of management in the definition frame of leadership. These elements included those offered below:

<u>MANAGEMENT</u>	<u>LEADERSHIP</u>
<b>Fayol’s foundational perspective -management process includes planning, organizing, motivating and controlling.</b>	<b>A multidirectional process in which dynamic actors exercise mutual influence.</b>
<b><u>Mechanistic</u> Hierarchical – organizational chart Legal frameworks/Department of Labor (DOL) Prescriptive outlined in Human Resource documents Contractual obligations outline by state statutes Monetary exchange Task focused Job description frame work exchange Formalized exchange with legal obligations</b>	<b><u>Organic</u> Non-hierarchical Agency framework Voluntary Psychic obligations Dynamic and emergent Fluid leader/follower roles within individuals and group members Transcends task – relationship focused About creation of synergy</b>

There exists a trend toward more organic leadership structures. Leadership theories such as *Transcendental Leadership*, *Tribal Leadership*, and *Alternating Leadership* compelled many researchers to view the typical pyramid-shaped organizational structure and gravitate towards a systems perspective (Alexakis, 2009). For instance, the “inverted pyramid” represents a different look at the role of management: placing the CEO and senior management in a support role to front-line professionals, thus opening the environment to *Alternating Leader/Follower* behaviors.

Previous papers identified the *Alternating Leader/Follower* Model and acknowledged the natural spontaneity and duality that resides in all individuals, at all levels of the organization to select leader or follower behaviors at will (Andert, Platt and Alexakis, 2010). It is a natural, behavioral gift bestowed upon all individuals and spontaneously expressed based on parochial agency needs (Andert et al, 2010).

Acknowledgement of the expanding realities of leadership as individually dual-role and spontaneous expands the understanding of leadership and its future research foci, and it also enlightens application of leadership – this is a circular reality (Kragness, 1994).

The next generation leadership paradigm points to the natural expression of dynamic leader-follower duality. The recent government take-over in Egypt shows how quickly ordinary citizens can assume leading and following behaviors, at-will (Egypt New Stories, 2-15-2011). The Baby Boomers (currently 45% of the workforce) and Generation X (currently 40% of the workforce) are dominating the working environment (Winzenburg & Magnus, 2007), and their collective leadership style is organic. The Millennials or Generation Y (1980-2000) currently account for only 10% of the workforce and will affect a change of leadership style in the workplace.

### *The Generations in Review*

Three generations are beginning to dominate the workplace: the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and the Millennials. They each have a different set of leadership styles, values and core experiences. The Baby Boomers (1943-1960 or 1946-1964) “advocate a leadership style characterized by their consensus work value and ethic[s]” (Salahuddin, 2010, p. 4). The Boomers indulge strongly in participative leadership (Houlihan, 2007; Dwyer, 2009; Frandsen, 2009; Salahuddin, 2010). Yet, this generation lacks full leadership skill development in areas that include: understanding, listening, communicating, motivating, and delegating necessary to exploit synergy with other workers. The lack of access to management and leadership education by the Baby Boomers compared to latter generations (i.e., X and Y) may have a great deal to do with it (Gundlach, Zivnuska & Stoner, 2006; Joo & Lim, 2009). University business programs are a relatively new phenomenon but research views of traditionalist leadership have proliferated since the early 1990’s. The assumptions surrounding traditional leadership saturate the curriculum provided and may account for the lessened view of the fluidity of workplace leadership. Yet in practice, the traditionalist mechanistic structures are giving way to Baby Boomer-Generation X friendly workplaces as exemplified by such places as Zappos, Google and SAS. These workplaces provide workers greater freedom of workplace expression, autonomy and family balance.

The Boomer core values include optimism and positivity at times, plus a need for strong work, and personal gratification (Frandsen, 2009). The early Baby Boomers embraced the value of having to sacrifice to get ahead and that made the early Boomers “very loyal to their employers and colleagues” (Houlihan, 2007, p. 9). This generation values personal gratification and growth, being rewarded monetarily, ambition and collaboration with their goals plus a desire to “*put their stamp on things*” (Houlihan, 2007; Dwyer, 2007, p. 2). Boomers received influences from exposure to such events as the Viet Nam War, the Cold War, Civil Rights Movement, the Cuban Missile Crisis, free love, women’s movement and equal pay, and assassinations (Williams, 2007; Dwyer, 2009).

The Generation Xers (also called Gen X, Nexus) (1960-1980) are considered the “not as a separate generation, but rather the concluding stages of the baby boom generation” (Dwyer, 2007, p. 2). Generation X and the second half of the Baby Boomers have similar values and characteristics. Gen Xers *prefer* to lead. However, this generation reportedly lacks the people skills of the previous generations, and their straightforwardness may negatively affect others (Salahuddin, 2007). Generation X leadership style foci is on fairness and competence as they forge a new work environment (Houlihan, 2007; Salahuddin, 2010). Typically, Generation X is characterized as “independent (yet depend on their parents), selfish or cynical, question authority, resilient, adaptable, culturally progressive, technologically savvy, expect immediate results, and committed to their team and their specific boss (Frandsen, 2009). They are more about productivity than the number of hours spent on the job (Houlihan, 2007, p. 9). The idea of “face time” is a waste and does not sit well with them. This generation was influenced by the reality of being a latch-key kid, the proliferation of single-parent homes, soaring divorce rates, and the increasing involvement of women in the workforce, cultural difference, fallen heroes, the Challenger disaster, struggling economy, the energy crisis, and personal computers (Williams, 2007; Deal, 2007; Zemke et al, 2000). The second half of the Baby Boomer generation and the Generation X are both positively predisposed towards synergistic work. A study by Personnel Decisions International indicated that U.S.

firms will face a substantial employee skills shift and knowledge void (Winzenburg & Magnus, 2007; Williams, 2007) and synergy will become necessary resource to support firm performance.

The Millennials' (also called Generation Y, Nexters, Net Generation or Baby Boom Echo) (1980-2000) leadership style is still to be discovered (Salahuddin, 2007; Foot & Stoffman, 1998, p. 30; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Zemke et al, 2002). The core values are similar to Generation Xers. However, the Millennial generation brought back the rise of the child as the most important person. Millennials are optimistic, civic duty minded, confident, achievement focused, social, and moral with street smarts and a solid awareness of diversity. This generation grew up with a focus on the family; lives filled with schedules and structured activities (Dwyer, 2007). According to Dawn (2004), Generation Y or Millennials currently seek learning opportunities and challenges. The Millennial Generation's core values include diverse global thinking, balance, changing technological forces, fun, informal, self-reliant, and pragmatism (Foot & Stoffman, 1998).

Major realities influencing this generation included computers, schoolyard violence (e.g. Columbine), the Oklahoma bombings, celebrity scandals (e.g., O. J. Simpson and Bill Clinton), parents losing their employment; and an ever-increasing diversity in linguistics, ethnicity, sexual alignment and non-traditional families (Dwyer, 2007; Rhodes, 1983).

The generation that is leaving the workforce now has such titles as the Veterans, Traditionalist, Silent Generation (Salahuddin, 2007; Foot and Stoffman, 1998, p. 30; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Zemke et al, 2002). This group disaggregates into three separate populations that include; the *Roaring Twenties* of 1920 – 1929; The *Depression Babies* of 1939 – 1949; and the *World War II* group of 1940 – 1946 (Dwyer, 2007). Collectively, this generation grew up under a strict regime, taught to value quality, respect, and authority (Houlihan, 2007). Ninety-five percent of this generation has retired (Frandsen, 2009).

#### *Leadership and the Generations*

The Veterans as a whole generation (1925-1946) valued obedience over individuality. Veterans believed in collective action, optimism about the future, and a trust in centralized authority. The Baby Boomers are quite different, and desire work environments that are democratic and humane, with a casual work ethic that allows workers to balance family needs. Similarly, the Generation Xers work ethic values adaptability, independence, lack of intimidation from authority figures and creativity.

A study by Salahuddin (2010) ranked the most admired leaders by generation. The results are below in Table 1.

**TABLE 1  
MOST ADMIRED LEADERS AS RANKED BY THE GENERATIONS**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Veteran</b>	<b>Baby Boomer</b>	<b>Generation X</b>	<b>Millennial or Nexter</b>
<b>Ambitious</b>	2	10	10	8
<b>Caring</b>	4	4	3	10
<b>Competent</b>	1	1	4	1
<b>Determined</b>	9	9	5	2
<b>Forward-looking</b>	10	2	5	5
<b>Honest</b>	3	5	1	4
<b>Imaginative</b>	6	6	7	9
<b>Inspiring</b>	8	3	9	7
<b>Loyal</b>	7	7	2	6
<b>Self-controlled</b>	5	8	6	3

Source: Salahuddin, 2010, p. 5

Salahuddin (2010) results indicate a difference across generations. While Baby Boomers and Generation X find desirable ambitious leaders, Millennials ranked *caring* as the most desirable leader quality, secondly only to *ambitiousness*. Only the Veterans ranked *forward looking* as a desirable leader characteristic. A second trend exists between the Xers and Millennials with both rating *imaginative* and *inspiring* as desirable leader qualities. Consistently, the traditional leadership paradigm of control and authority is void from this list.

The Boomer and Generation Xers are predisposed to work collectively and gravitate naturally towards *alternating leadership*. The generational elements indicate that all that is required now is to acknowledge and purposefully utilize the human talent that resides within the generations now in the workplace. Workplaces need the full efforts of all workers in synergy to meet the demands of resource maximization.

The top-down organizational power structure seen in most corporations seems at odds with the concept of workforce maximization (De Geus, 1997; Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Kotter, 1996; Phillips, 2001; Kidwell, 2009). Instead of the system encouraging behaviors for long-term organizational advancement, executives have traditionally and contractually received incents that direct their attention on short-term results (Gilley, 1998; Sahadi, 2007; Banham, 2009). The most obvious incongruity between executives and employees rests in the ever-increasing disparity in compensation. One report asserts that CEOs of the largest U.S. corporations are paid \$364 for every \$1 paid to the average worker (a ratio of 364:1) (Sahadi, 2007; DeCarlo, 2006; Sahadi, 2007; Buck, T., & Main, 2005). Some theorists explain that the substantial pay disparity is the product of excessive management power in setting compensation. The idea that executive pay is performance-based is not borne out of research evidence (Dyck & Neubert, 2010; Bebhuk & Fried, 2004).

Money, prestige, and power may subsequently take precedence over the lasting welfare of the organization and the full development of its people – and the fluid expression of leadership behaviors at all levels of the organization. Employees take note of the apparent misaligned focus on extrinsic rewards, especially as the salary disparity continues to grow. Huge payouts to CEOs occur in other countries, but there is a much higher wage differential between those at the top and bottom of the pay scale in the United States. As the Veteran Generation fully retires, the remaining Baby Boomers and Xers will dominate the workforce and organizations will face their values and demands.

#### *Alternating Leadership and the Maximization of the Workforce*

Baby Boomers and Generation Xers wish to leave their mark on the organization. One way for the organizations to support this action is to increase in the powerful force of *Alternating Leaders* within all levels of an organization. Previous research offered by Andert, Alexakis and Platt (2011) states that the essential nature of an organization is not in its structure or in its organisms (i.e., people) alone but in its interrelationships (Wheatley, 1992; Weick, 1979, Weick, 1969). The natural phenomenon of self-organization plays out in the corporate world several times each day. It is *self-maintaining*, *self-renewing* and *self-transcending*.

In recent years, there has been an increasing acceptance of the idea that leadership does not only stem from external sources in a top-down structure or process, but can also emerge from within the team or collective itself (Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp, & Gilson, 2008). *Alternating Leadership* (also expressed as *shared*, *emergent*, *distributed*, *tribal* and *lateral leadership*) flourishes among the ranks as employees embrace a full expression of their work and not short-term, self-enhancing incentive rewards (Elloy, 2008). Within the workforce, *Alternating Leaders* take on ad hoc leadership positions temporarily and freely alternate back to being observers, followers, and so forth (Andert et al, 2011).

More broadly, *Alternating Leadership* occurs in action throughout the organization although one's formal title may not reflect these significant behaviors and subtle shifts (Arnott & Service, 2006). Spontaneous leadership/followership behavior with permeable boundaries is continuously occurring in organizations, as employees who are spontaneously associating within various real and virtual networks pass leadership responsibilities to one another on an informal basis, as is deemed necessary. It is the participatory behavior plentiful in the Baby Boomers and Xers (Andert et al, 2011).

The concept of leadership within the framework of informal teams has many implications, primarily

for the growth and success of the entire firm. The decentralized model, where employees throughout the organizations are alternating between leader and the led, abounds. Long-held practices of mutual aid and employee-level organization are in fact an outcome of a social dynamic within an organization (Gundlach, Zivnuska, & Stoner, 2006). Although these interconnections and practices are well within the boundaries of most corporate policies, they are dissimilar from the mainstream idea of powerful central corporate leadership framing all policies and procedures and driving outcomes. *Alternating Leadership* is not the same as bestowed formal management titles.

*Leadership and the Organization*

While research on leadership proliferates, the previous review of the traditional research shows that leadership research remains in its infancy stage (Bass, 1981; Greenleaf, 1977; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Bryman, 1992; Block, 1993; Zigarmi, Blanchard, O’Connor, & Edeburn, 2000; Northouse, 2001; Yu & Liang, 2004; Zigarmi, Blanchard, O’Connor, & Edeburn, 2005). Though decades of studies, casework, descriptive articles, and relational research exist yet, there is no known recipe for the creation of a leader (Bass, 1981; Greenleaf, 1977; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Bryman, 1992; Block, 1993; Zigarmi, Blanchard, O’Connor, & Edeburn, 2000; Northouse, 2001; Yu & Liang, 2004; Zigarmi, Blanchard, O’Connor, & Edeburn, 2005). It is self-evident that leadership behaviors are present in any random grouping of individuals. Equally, leadership behaviors transcend hierarchical limitations and remain expressed dynamically throughout any organization.

There is no known universal formula for eliciting on-command leadership behavior from an individual (Bass, 1981; Greenleaf, 1977; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Bryman, 1992; Block, 1993; Zigarmi, Blanchard, O’Connor, & Edeburn, 2000; Northouse, 2001; Yu & Liang, 2004; Zigarmi, Blanchard, O’Connor, & Edeburn, 2005). More importantly, one cannot restrain leadership from spontaneously occurring. Leading and following behaviors are emergent, the spontaneous domain of every individual. The matter is worthy of discussion.

Andert (et al, 2011) continue to ask, *why do so many managers, administrators, and corporate boards associate leadership as a skill exclusive to upper management?*

*Leadership and Management*

One reason the question continues to be asked is the failure to differentiation management from leadership. Although linking motivation to leadership is very common, in reality organizations are able to effect quasi-motivation through mechanistic elements that include pay, performance reviews, promotions, and discipline practices to gain adherence to organizational policies and procedures. Mechanistic management realities can even coerce compliance and desired behaviors into existence through threats, punishments, and reward (or bribes).

The *management* approach of motivation begins with established norms as spelled out in corporate policies and procedures; and reinforced as outlined in the humans resource handbook. Leadership transcends all of that as an organic component of any organization and it is spontaneously present throughout the organization—it cannot be effectively codified into a corporate handbook.

*Alternating Leadership* is the organic, synergistic, and voluntary exchange among the workforce. The management process is the frame or the setting in which *Alternating Leadership* voluntarily flourishes.

<u>MANAGEMENT:</u>	<u>LEADERSHIP</u>
Fayol’s foundational perspective labels the management process to include organizing, motivating and controlling.	A voluntary relationship between two or more individuals
<b>Mechanistic Hierarchical Legal frameworks/DOL</b>	<b>Organic Non-hierarchical Agency framework</b>

<b>Prescriptive/HR document</b> <b>Contractual obligations</b> <b>Monetary exchange</b> <b>Task focused</b> <b>Job description</b> <b>Formalized exchange</b>	<b>Voluntary</b> <b>Psychic obligations</b> <b>Dynamic/emergent</b> <b>Fluid leader/follower roles</b> <b>Transcends task</b> <b>About synergy</b>
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The mechanistic elements of management are dissimilar to the spontaneity of *Alternating Leadership* behaviors that can and do emerge at all levels. Managers who possess well developed leading and managing behaviors are valued and still considered distinct in the contemporary organization. The differences separate the formal management process of planning, organizing, motivating and controlling (Fayol's original work) and *alternating leader/follower* behaviors.

## CONCLUSIONS

Traditional research focused on the leader and the leader's role within the hierarchical structure of the firm. Today, the Baby Boomer, Xers and Millennial generations' focus will place greater emphasis on the spontaneous synergy among the rank and file.

Leadership research that continues to focus upon the leaders as central, including researchers who benevolently look at leadership as an obligation to *serve others* (Stewardship and Servant leadership) (Greenleaf, 1977; Block, 1993) or leadership as a *values-based* benevolent obligation to others (Blanchard & O'Connor, 1997, 2003; Zigarmi, Blanchard & O'Connor, 2000, 2005) will be incongruent with the Baby Boomers, Xers and Millennials. New leadership research explores the more organic nature and frames the leadership phenomenon using *quantum physics*, *self-organizing systems*, and *chaos theory* (Wheatley, 1992; Weick, 1979, 1969). It is in the latter studies that leadership emerges as Social Exchange phenomena in which an individual explores spontaneous synergy with other organism (individuals), who may at-will, select either the leader/follower role. If one views the concept of *Alternating Leadership* to known leadership theories, the differences are clear - the next generation of leader/follower behavior is less hierarchical in structure. It is more dual-role focused and spontaneous. These qualities appeal to the Baby Boom, Xers and Millennial generations.

Traditional top-down roles restrict and challenge the accepted empowerment and innovation sought by the Baby Boomers and Generation Y, who will soon make up more than 85% of the existing workforce (Dwyer, 2007). An organization's ability to generate products and services rests on the work efforts of the front-line professionals. Exploitation of *Alternating Leadership* expands synergy - a treasured corporate resource.

## Recommendations

*Alternating Leadership* may best flourish in organizational environments proactive with prolific opportunities for a full combination of *formal and self-directed* training interventions and opportunities augmented by *facilitated* action learning activities.

Organizations will also do well to consider the cultural elements that expand positive worker relationships. The conceptual model that supports expansion of *Alternative Leadership/Followership* is best understood through the interaction and linkages of formal training, self-directed learning, facilitated and proactive application interventions and sustaining cultural components as outlined and described in the matrix below (see Table 2).

**TABLE 2  
ANDERT TRAINING MATRIX**

<b>Formal Training</b>	<b>Facilitated Continuous Training/Learning</b>	<b>Self-Directed Training</b>	<b>Corporate Cultural Activities &amp; Realities</b>
Adventure Learning Courses	Coaching	Access to Dash Boards Performance Metrics	Appraisal Performance System
Assessment Center Programs	Committee Work	Automated Coaching	Chief Learning Officer
Business Games	Communications via Group Ware	Career Planning Software	Corporate Newsletter
Classroom Training Events	Expert Directories	CD-Rom Training	Electronic Performance Support System (EPPS)
Conferences	Externships	Corporate Library Material	Expert Networking System
Corporate Lecture Series	Group Interventions	Desktop Module Training	Flexible Work Schedules
Corporate Partnership Program Assignments	Identity Group Meetings or Cross-cultural Committees	Digital Collaboration	Folklore Stories
Corporate University	Job Sharing Program	Distance Learning Programs	Integrated Business Units
Formal Apprenticeships Courses	Learning Networks	DVD Library	Job Design and Redesign Program
Formal Morning Meetings	Mentoring Programs	e-Books	Knowledge Management System
In-service Programs	Reverse Senior Mentorship	In-basket Projects	Learning Management System
Intranet-based Training	On-the-Job Role Plays	Interactive Video Training	Quality or Six Sigma Programs
Lecture Presentation	Programmed Job Rotation Programs	iPod courses/conferences	Reward Programs
Management Training Program	Professional Association Membership	Learning Labs	Succession Planning Program
Outsourced Training Programs	Quality Committees	Learning Portals	Sponsored Community Participation Programs
Pod Casts	Volunteer Community Work Experience	Mini-games	Strategic Training
Professional Association Certification	Special Project Assignments	Personal Analysis or Observation	Suggestion Boxes
Retreats	Simulation Games	Realistic Job Preview	Supportive Workplace Environment
Subject Matter Experts	Supervised On-the-Job Training	Self Observation	Talent Management Program
Team Training Sessions	Task Group Assignment	Simulation Programs	Team Leader Development Programs
Teleimersion Courses	Temporary Assignments	University Courses	Theme Posters
Teleconferencing	Topic Wiki Network	Virtual Reality Platforms w/avatars	Tuition Reimbursement Program
Topic Workshops	Town Hall Meetings	Virtual Work Assignments	Use of Workforce Train-the-Trainers
Workshops	Work-out Sessions	Web-based Courses	Workforce Career Software Program

Organizations can address the deficit leadership training of baby Boomers and increase the leader skills in the Xers and Millennials with traditional formal training events augmented with self-paced learning and mentored or facilitated opportunities to learn in real-time. The above matrix includes traditional elements of training and development with *technology savvy* elements that will engage the late baby Boomers through the Millennial generation. The matrix supports spontaneous learning and workforce interaction.

Descriptively, elements listed under the “Formal Training” are structured interventions, containing specific learning objects, timeframes, and controlled activities. Leadership development training appears in this category. Elements listed under the “Facilitated Training” are real-time, action-oriented activities and interventions that may or may not involve direct management supervision, but involve people working collectively and experiencing the resultant rewards of social learning. *Facilitated Training* interventions may result in management serving only as the recipient of the group’s finished product.

Elements listed under “Self-Directed” are autonomous interventions that are by title and practice support individual, self-paced learning. “Self-directed Training” interventions are personal education and development activities that embrace anything from individual reading, as well as study in a selected area (including readings on leadership) to individual selection of University courses as a means of self-development.

Finally, elements listed under the “Cultural Activities” column serve to reinforce a culture of continuous growth and increased solid relationship among workers. Of particular interest is the use of organizational directories that help identify and codify a list of in-house experts on topics and skills that can be resourced at will by workers, as needed, when needed.

The *Alternating Leadership* principle exists when one or more workers gather and interact - alternating leadership/followership is ever-present, dynamic, and self-initiating in all environments. It captures and expands the individual talents among any group of people. Its importance stems from the concept of synergy that purports that interaction among participants produces more than just the sum of its parts. The serendipitous aspects of the interactions in the workplace similarly transfers and exploits independent knowledge and expands learning.

With 95% of the Traditionalist generation now retired from the workforce, the remaining Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and up-and-coming Millennial generation will bring a fresh sense of leadership and followership that is more participatory and dynamic. Applying traditional leadership assumptions of the leader: as the *nucleus*; the preeminence of a *few people*; the *central* expression of the power; the central focus of activity; a position of *high potential*; the *primary agent*; and a person one pace ahead of the group, lessens the potential for expression of spontaneous and dynamic leader and follower roles by the next generation of workers.

The first purpose of this paper is to refocus the definition of leadership or leading/following behaviors as an ad hoc and voluntary relationship or linkage between two or more individuals that result in synergistic outcomes. *Alternating Leadership/Followership* emerges from the interconnections of employees’ collective knowledge, skills, and abilities (Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp, & Gilson, 2008). Equally important is the mutual self-selection when a person or worker actively engages in the leader or follower role as desired as a means of social learning.

The second purpose of this paper is the recognition of the positive impact *Alternating Leadership/Followership* will have on the new generational of workers and formal management. Allowing organizations to transform the environment leading to much needed and long overdue reforms in a way that minimize the unsightly blemishes of corporate restrictions, and expanding proactive talent management for tomorrow’s workers.

*Alternating Leader/Follower* roles, as needed, is the next frontier of understanding of leadership for the new generations.

## ENDNOTES

1. (interactive video link available : [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gHIEBU\\_NSg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gHIEBU_NSg) )

2. (Interactive video link available: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R55e-uHQna0&NR=2> )
3. (Interactive video link available: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_D5iNx6qn3c&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_D5iNx6qn3c&feature=related) )

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