

## Chapter 2

# Leadership, Collective Efficacy and Team Performance: A New Paradigm for the Next Generation

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### ABSTRACT

*In this paper, the author examines the effect of leader attributes on the collective efficacy of a group of members of Generation Next, and the interrelation of leadership and collective efficacy on the team's performance. A case study approach was implemented by 3 teams of business students participating in a national business competition between the years 2009-2011. Results indicate transformational leadership qualities inspire greater levels of collective efficacy. Moreover, teams demonstrating higher collective efficacy also performed better in the competition, suggesting a positive relationship between collective efficacy and team performance. Implications of these findings are discussed and a scope for future research is offered.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the modern academic environment where student-centered engagement is a relative theme for academic instruction, work teams are used as a method of involving students in their own learning. This approach is especially prevalent in higher education where the focus is on preparing students for their imminent roles on future organizational work teams. Yet, the performance and work-related attitudes and behaviors of today's students (tomor-

row's workers) are notably different than those of their predecessors. Researchers have profiled this generation extensively (Jurkiewicz & Bradley, 2002; Rekar Munro, 2009; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000), and few topics have sparked as much discussion among managers as do their unique and sometimes troubling work-related characteristics. Most data on this group describes Nexters as highly-motivated and achievement-oriented. In contrast, they are also said to be high-maintenance, over-zealous and attention-seeking. As organizations embrace their many positive qualities, it is incumbent upon leadership

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to acknowledge the variance in their performance traits to construct environments conducive to their success. This is especially significant when the goal is to influence their behavior and predict performance outcomes. Thus, this study attempts to answer the research question: does transactional leadership or transformational leadership create collective efficacy which translates into successful team performance for Generation Next?

A body of research into the impact of team leadership on performance exists, and it is believed that team leaders have a greater impact on team performance than other team members (Bass, 1998; Yukl, 1999) and some researchers suggest poor leadership as a reason why teams fail to reach full potential. Previous empirical studies, however, have given little attention to the demographics of these teams as more than a control variable. Yet, given the distinctiveness of generational characteristics of Generation Next, the primary objective of this research is to expand extant literature on team leadership and team performance by examining the subgroup level and studying the relationship between leadership style and team performance in a cohort comprised solely of Nexters. Although, the literature is dense with reviews on the influence of leadership on group performance, little is known about how leaders create effective teams (Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001).

Offering a counter argument to the aforementioned reviews, Koch and Fisher (1998) found little empirical support for the effect of leadership on performance quality in higher education; finding only anecdotal support for its influence on the performance of operational processes. This suggests that in an environment where intrinsic motivation is prevalent, like in academia, the leaders' behavior may be an important factor, but it may not directly influence a team's success or failure (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985). As such, some researchers propose additional information should be sought to further understand this relationship (Chen & Bliese, 2002; Gibson 2003; Gully, Incalcaterra, Joshi, & Beaubien, 2002). An

added consideration is the value Generation Next places on relationships with this group being said to have a greater affinity for teamwork than did their predecessors. Thus, this study will consider leadership's effects on building collective efficacy in teams of Nexters.

As society advances, and the market transcends international, social and economic boundaries, there are a multitude of reasons to seek greater understanding on the development of successful teams. This is especially significant because with globalization, teamwork is becoming a principal method of organizing labor, and Generation Next is rapidly changing the structure of these teams. With the changing demographics of today's workplace (e.g., retirement of baby-boomers), organizations will need to heavily rely on the skills of this group who are certain to be in high-demand. Previous research on Generation Next has examined educational differences and alternate learning styles of Nexters suggesting this group is more inclined to be sociable, collaborative, and able to work on parallel tasks (Raines, 2002). An additional stream of literature focusing on leadership and this generation encourages managers to focus on setting realistic goals and providing a sense of belonging from the onset (Hansford, 2002), modeling desired outcome-focused behavior (Tulgan, 2004) and offering project-centered work (Allen, 2004) with coaching style guidance (Martin & Tulgan, 2004).

## **Profile of the Next Generation**

Researchers (Jurkiewicz & Bradley, 2002; Martin & Tulgan, 2002; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000) have profiled them extensively, although Loughlin and Barling (2001) suggest occupational research of younger workers is an under-researched area. Members of Generation Next are well educated and high performing, with strong technological skills (Jurkiewicz, 2000; Zemke et al., 2000). This group has enormous potential, and they are highly desired as new recruits; they

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