

# Who's Leading Next?

A White Paper from Slingshot Group

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Researched and Written by  
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in association with Neal Joseph



SLINGSHOT  
GROUP

## INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH SPECIFICS

In the spring of 2016, Slingshot Group asked J. David Schmidt & Associates (*wiseplanning.net*) to conduct a national survey of Christian nonprofit and church leaders. Their goal was to hear leaders' thoughts relating to the leadership of their organizations—specifically, the leaders who would lead their organizations into the future. We asked:

- **What are the issues that are keeping you awake at night?**
- **What do you believe will be required of your replacement when they take over?**
- **What does next mean for you and your organization's cause and strategy fulfillment?  
What does next mean for your organization's development and brand?**
- **What are your perceived needs for and thoughts about using a search firm for your organization's next mid-or high-level hire?**

## HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

An anonymous survey was developed by J. David Schmidt & Associates in partnership with Slingshot Group. The survey was then distributed through a push email invitation with a link to the survey. The survey was sent to a purposive, expert sample of known individuals in leadership positions. Lists of potential respondents who fit the criteria were provided by:

- » SLINGSHOT GROUP
- » WILLOW CREEK ASSOCIATION
- » JOHN PEARSON ASSOCIATES, INC.
- » J. DAVID SCHMIDT & ASSOCIATES

## WHO RESPONDED?

A total of **5,460** individuals were invited to participate;  
**529** usable responses were received,  
representing **9.68%** of those who were originally sampled.

A response of this size gives us a "margin of error" of +/- 4.05%, 95% of the time. In other words, 95% of the time we have confidence that the actual percentage is within 4.05% of what we are observing. Some questions had fewer responses than the potential base of 529 responses.

The fewer the responses, the greater the margin of error tends to be. For questions where the universe of responses is more evenly split, greater care in interpreting the findings is needed. In cases where a total made more sense, numbers are used instead of percentages. In some cases, numbers do not add up to 100 where multiple responses were requested.

## AGE

Millennial (<33 years)	4%
Gen X/Y (34-51)	29%
Baby Boomer (52-70)	64%
Builder (over 70)	4%

## GENDER

Male	72%
Female	28%

## WHERE THEY LIVE AND WORK

RESPONDENTS RESIDED IN **40** STATES, PRIMARILY FROM, IN RANK ORDER:

- Illinois
- Colorado
- California
- Texas
- Indiana
- Pennsylvania
- Tennessee

**THREE** KINDS OF ORGANIZATIONS WERE REPRESENTED:

- Local church **56%**
- Nonprofit **29%**
- For-profit/Marketplace **14.7%**

**FIVE** LEADERSHIP LEVELS WERE REPRESENTED:

- **56% were church leaders** (*senior pastor, executive pastor [21%], church staff, other*)
- **20% were either a president, CEO or executive director**
- **9.7% were directors or managers**
- **4% were vice presidents**
- **3.5% held a different position in the C-suite**

ANNUAL ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGET RANGE

- |                     |            |            |
|---------------------|------------|------------|
| • <\$500,000        | <b>91</b>  | <b>18%</b> |
| • \$500K-1 million  | <b>67</b>  | <b>13%</b> |
| • \$1-5 million     | <b>190</b> | <b>37%</b> |
| • \$5-10 million    | <b>41</b>  | <b>8%</b>  |
| • Over \$10 million | <b>123</b> | <b>24%</b> |

CURRENT NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

- **Mode:** <10 most frequent response
- **Median:** 25-49 50% of the responses are above and 50% below this category

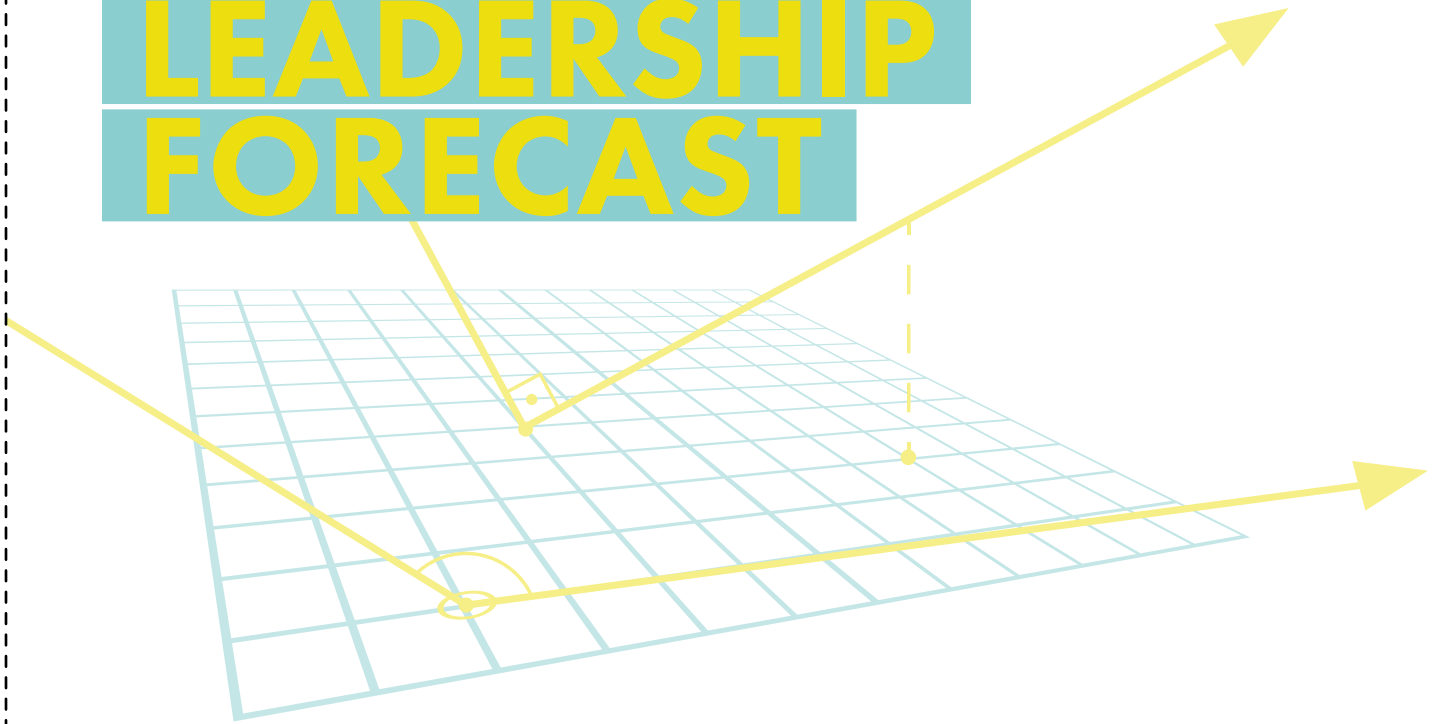
## ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT OF RESPONDENTS

Context matters. Context is what determines our opinions, informs our perspectives, and influences our behaviors. Our respondents come from three primary business/ministry contexts: nonprofit organizations, local churches and the marketplace.

What ties these three diverse groups together is one word: leadership. Our respondents share a perspective from the vantage point of the leader's seat. They're in a position where they're able to see both current issues and what's on the horizon. While a purposive expert sample has limits, we believe many of the central ideas you'll see in the responses and the relationships observed in the data provide useful and reliable insights.

*Here's what our respondents see...*

# SECTION 1: A CHANGING LEADERSHIP FORECAST



*With Baby Boomers often dominating senior leadership positions – and with about 10,000 Baby Boomers turning 65 each day from now until about 2028 – we can expect a steadily changing leadership picture. 26% of the respondents currently have two or more open positions on their senior leadership team.*

*Another 24% anticipate three or more senior leaders moving on in the next five years, and just under a third (31%) anticipate the succession of their senior leader will happen in the next three years or so. When you put it all together, these statistics reveal a clear changing of the guard—but a change for what purpose?*

*If stability and “another good year” is your vision, then you’ll have opportunities in the years ahead to maintain the status quo by seeking leadership who can keep things stable. But if you’re looking to “rethink and reset,” these “open seats” create an incredible opportunity to bring leaders into your organization’s story who can lead processes that better align your ministry with what’s next.*

*When considering an impending succession, it’s critical for your Board of Directors to truly know the culture and context of your organization—not only to be able to find the best fit, but to find leaders who can lead you into a preferred vision for the future.*

# NUMBER OF OPEN POSITIONS IN SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

(President, Pastor, CEO, C-suite, VP, Director, Manager)

- **0 positions:** 51%
- **1 position:** 23%
- **2-4 positions:** 22%
- **5 or more:** 4%

# NUMBER OF SENIOR LEADERS LIKELY TO MOVE ON/RETIRE IN NEXT FIVE YEARS

- **0:** 23%
- **1-2:** 53%
- **3-5:** 20%
- **6 or more:** 4%

# POSITIONS DIFFICULT TO FILL

- **Senior Leader/Chief Exec. Officer/Exec. Director:** 38%
- **Director/Manager:** 33%
- **Chief Development Officer:** 20%
- **Other Vice President/Senior Leader:** 20%
- **Chief Operations Officer:** 18%
- **Chief Program Officer:** 18%
- **Chief Financial Officer:** 16%
- **Chief Marketing Officer:** 14%

**Respondents from local churches were more likely to say a Program Leader/Chief Program Officer was a difficult position to fill, while nonprofits were more likely to say Chief Development Officer.**

# SUCCESSION OF PRESIDENT/CEO/SENIOR PASTOR

- **52% do not anticipate a succession process in the near future.**
- **Of these 52%, respondents from churches were more likely to indicate this than any other respondent type.**
- **31% anticipate a succession in next three years or so.**

## CURRENT LEADERS IDENTIFY CRITICAL ISSUES THEIR REPLACEMENTS WILL FACE

Understanding the issues current leaders see and the qualities future leaders will need to address them was a core question in better understanding who will lead next. Those who responded to the survey were invited to lean into the future and think about the person who would occupy their chair after them.

THE SURVEY POSED A SIMPLE QUESTION FOR RESPONDENTS TO COMPLETE IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

### WHAT IS THE SINGLE MOST DIFFICULT ISSUE YOUR REPLACEMENT WILL FACE?

The clear and compelling theme drawn from their responses is expressed in an overarching question: Will my replacement have the depth of strategic leadership capabilities necessary to lead the organization successfully into the future? Here are just some of the issues:

- Cultural pressures that are affecting the organization's stakeholders and audience
- Navigating the progressive social values of some donors in combination with other donors who are more conservative
- Learning to "treat donors like grown-ups"
- The need to define success (Is it growth? Faithfulness?)
- Integrating technology (read: knowledge of and comfortability with all things digital)
- Working confidently with the Board
- Having the "experience and knowledge" to lead, develop and nurture both work relationships and the external relationships that have already been cultivated (read: the ability to care for both staff and donors)

AS ONE RESPONDENT ASKED, "CAN THIS PERSON HANDLE IT ALL?"

One dominant theme in the comments of respondents centered on funding concerns and growing the donor base as they look to the future. Leaders are looking for meaningful connections with past and emerging donors in a changing cultural context. In some instances, this context is marked by donor relations inventiveness (e.g. Go Fund Me initiatives or online/mobile giving, etc.) and comments reflected a sense of uncertainty as to how to catch up and engage effectively.

Tied to this theme was a sub-theme: Replacements will likely face strong headwinds in communicating the story of the organization. This challenge alone will require a level of future-oriented expertise to master not just current social media forms, but shape far more sophisticated media strategies that go beyond what the current leadership is managing.

## SKILLS OR QUALITIES NEEDED FROM FUTURE LEADERS OF THEIR ORGANIZATION

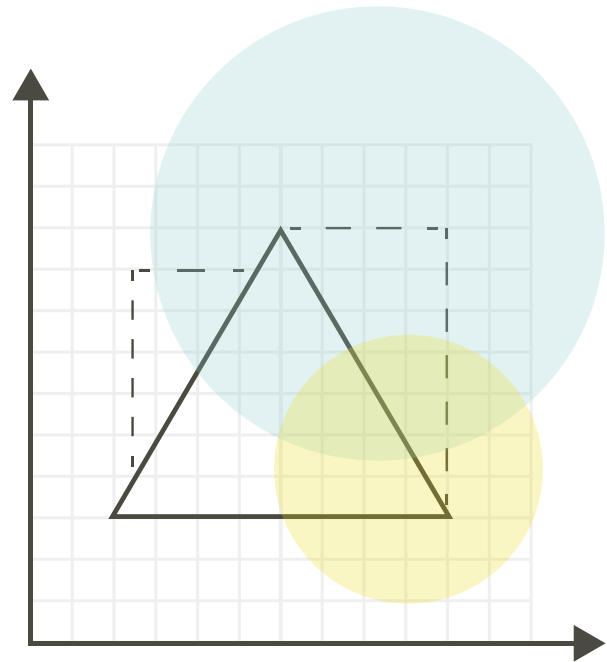
Respondents were invited to identify to what degree 27 different leadership skills and qualities would be needed by their successors. The findings were thought-provoking, revealing that current leaders stand in the present while also looking to the future. The fact that they can see what's needed in who leads next suggests they sense these skills and qualities are ones that are needed even now.

THE CHART ON THE NEXT PAGE EXPLAINS THEIR RESPONSES.

*Interestingly, isolated at the top — across all age groups, leader positions and types of organizations — 84% agreed that the skill of demonstrating genuine care for staff was the most-needed skill.*

### WHY WAS THIS A TOP QUALITY?

- **A guilt response?**
- **A concern that upcoming leaders don't seem to have this skill?**
- **A reflection of a current reality that the demands put on current staff are onerous?**
- **A reflection on the challenges of managing and leading under-developed staff members or staff members who aren't properly matched to their current positions?**



Whatever the drivers, “people-care” (think alignment of vision and capacity, work/life balance, organizational development and a new kind of HR focus) is vital in who leads next.

### THE CLUSTER OF NEEDED SKILLS AND QUALITIES THAT COMES NEXT INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:

- **Identifying and implementing needed innovations in our ministry strategy**
- **Discerning the times/understanding post-modern culture's impact on our organization**
- **Hiring forward-leaning leaders**

What hovers at the top of the minds of leaders seems to be a nagging sense of a gap: a gap between the status quo and a future that requires innovation, a gap between the culture and the organization, a gap between the current leadership pool and those who can and will lean into the future. Underpinning these gaps is the question that was raised earlier: Will my replacement have the depth of strategic leadership capabilities necessary to lead the organization successfully into the future?



Quality or Skill Needed	Percentage Who Identified This as a Highly Needed Skill/Quality	Mean Score (5 Point Scale with 5 Being a Highly Needed Skill/Quality)
Demonstrating genuine care for the staff	84%	4.30
Identifying and implementing needed innovations in our ministry strategy	83%	4.24
Discerning the times/understanding post-modern culture's impact on our organization	82%	4.24
Hiring forward-leaning leaders	81%	4.18
Growing our organization	78%	4.12
Younger leader development	78%	4.15
Staying the course theologically/biblically	77%	4.20
Getting measurable results/outcomes	75%	4.11
Identifying hidden leaders	73%	4.04
Refreshing the organizational culture	72%	3.97
Bridging generational gaps	68%	3.88
Casting a fresh vision	66%	3.89
Passionate about life balance	66%	3.83
Moving forward with necessary hiring/firing	63%	3.81
Developing our digital footprint	61%	3.70
Raising funds from younger donor groups	60%	3.64
Committed to the cause at any personal cost	59%	3.68
Succession planning	53%	3.45
Interfacing with our Board	50%	3.41
Refreshing Board membership	47%	3.26
Resetting our structure	42%	3.22
Cleaning up an organizational mess	37%	3.11
Rebuilding our technology infrastructure	30%	2.88
Merging with or acquiring other similar organizations	21%	2.35
Down-sizing	13%	2.17
Divesting assets	10%	2.00
Relocating our offices	6%	1.69

## TWO GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES MADE AN APPEARANCE IN THIS DATA AND THE DIFFERENCES ARE NOTEWORTHY.

MORE THAN ALL OTHER GENERATIONS, MILLENNIALS MORE FREQUENTLY IDENTIFIED THESE AS KEY QUALITIES IN WHO LEADS NEXT:

- **Less concerned than others about growing the organization and getting measurable results**
- **Younger leader development**
- **Identifying hidden leaders**
- **Refreshing the organizational culture**
- **Passionate about life balance**
- **Merging with or acquiring similar organizations**
- **Staying the course theologically**

BABY BOOMERS, ON THE OTHER HAND, MORE FREQUENTLY THAN ALL OTHER RESPONDENTS, IDENTIFIED THESE AS KEY QUALITIES IN WHO LEADS NEXT:

- **Demonstrating genuine care for staff**
- **Discerning the times**
- **Getting measurable outcomes**
- **Raising funds from younger donor groups**
- **Committed to the cause at any cost**

IN OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS, CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL AND CHURCH LEADERS TIED SEVERAL SPECIFIC SKILLS TO THE ISSUES THEY BELIEVE WILL BE NEEDED IN WHO LEADS NEXT:

- **Knowledge of organizational development**
- **Valuing the importance of strategic planning**
- **Widely innovative and visionary**

LEADERS STRONGLY REFERENCED THE NECESSITY FOR THEIR REPLACEMENTS TO POSSESS A STRONG SPIRITUAL HEART, USING DESCRIPTORS LIKE:

- **Humility**
- **Wisdom**
- **Perseverance**
- **Confidence**
- **Spirituality**

PARALLELING THIS SPIRITUAL DIMENSION WERE FREQUENT REFERENCES TO EQ (EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE):

- **Self-awareness**
- **Maturity in leadership**
- **Being a good listener**
- **Being highly relational**
- **Transparency**

**TRAVIS BRADBERRY, CO-AUTHOR OF  
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE 2.0 BELIEVES:**

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IS A FOUNDATIONAL SKILL WITH  
FOUR QUALITIES NEEDED TO ACHIEVE LIFE OBJECTIVES:

**SELF-AWARENESS**

*The ability to accurately recognize your emotions as they happen and to understand your general tendencies for responding to different people and situations.*

**SELF-MANAGEMENT**

*Using awareness of your emotions to choose what you say and do, in order to positively direct your behavior.*

**SOCIAL AWARENESS**

*Recognizing and understanding the emotions and perspectives of others.*

**RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT**

*Using awareness of your emotions and the emotions of others to manage interactions successfully.*

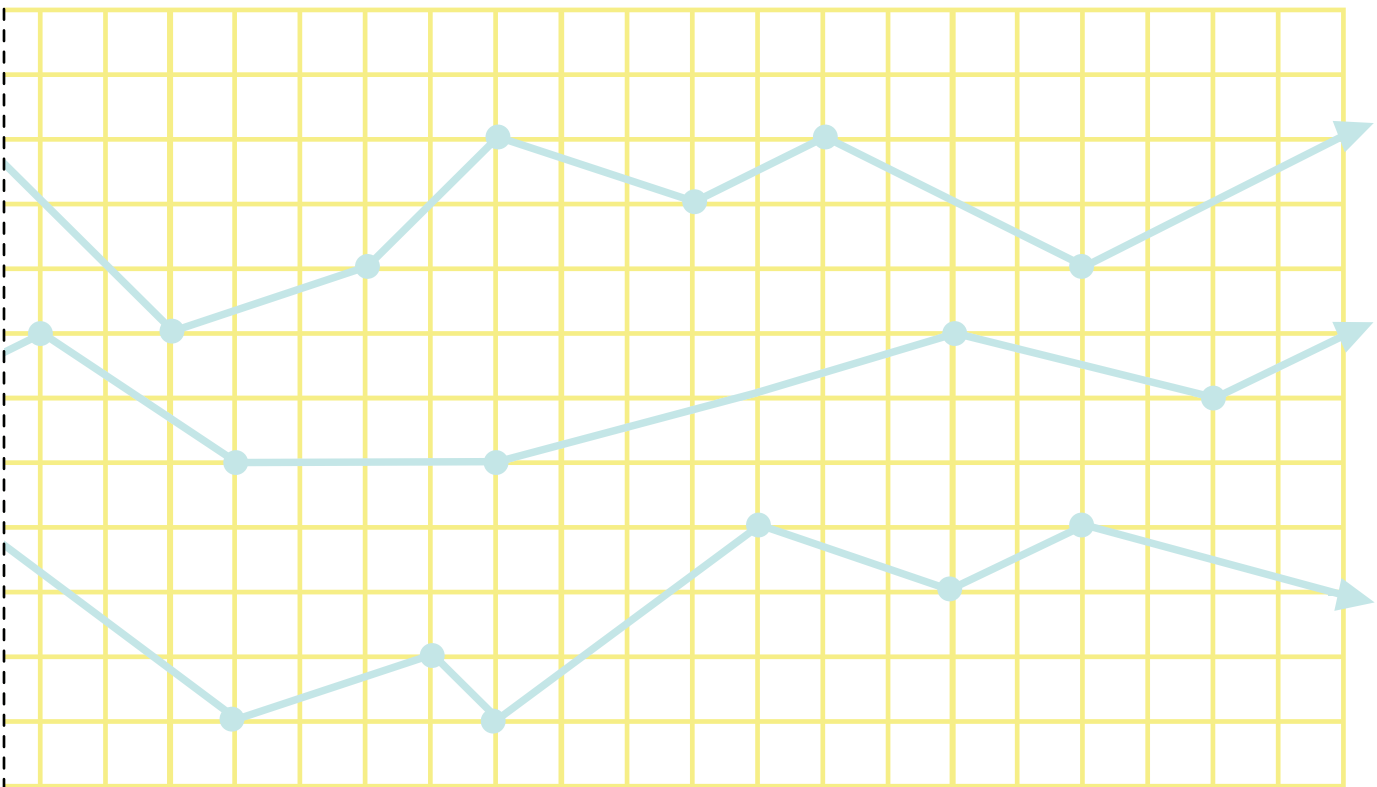
WHEN PEOPLE WORK ON THIS SKILL,  
IT TRICKLES INTO AND IMPACTS OTHER AREAS.

EQ ACCOUNTS FOR 60% OF JOB PERFORMANCE.

90% OF TOP PERFORMERS ARE HIGH IN EQ.

80% OF POOR PERFORMERS ARE LOW IN EQ.

# SECTION 2: WHO'S NEEDED & NOT NEEDED IN THE FUTURE?



*Respondents were invited to reflect on future positions that might be needed or not needed in their organizations and churches. Not surprisingly, few respondents could project a person that wouldn't be needed (nonprofits & churches have a strong tendency to keep layering and adding both programs and people without doing the challenging work of pruning).*

*If there was any pattern in the responses, it was a conflicted one. The comments suggest that there seems to be a need for a kind of leader that merges a range of skills and areas of focus, yet who currently has no recognizable name or place at the leadership table. In other words, "Something is trying to be born here."*

One strain of comments raised the prospect of the CFO or Donor Development Director not being needed in the future. This might be surprising, since “fundraising,” “story-telling” and “donor development” repeatedly bubble up to the top of the list of important skills needed or concerns that need to be addressed by future leaders. One respondent stated that the role of CFO might be outsourced, and another admitted that donor development “needs to be rethought.”

Another strain of comments suggested the person who will be needed in the future will fill a new role as a combined strategist, technology and digital guru—best described as a new understanding or definition of CTO (Chief Technology Officer). The interplay between digital platforms, constituencies and funding needs seems to be calling for someone new who focuses on organizational advancement of all kinds: donor development, brand development, organizational communication, online content curation, member care, social media presence, and more.

**Jason Thibeault,  
Senior Director of Marketing  
Strategy at Limelight:**

*“Ultimately, consumers want more from their online experience, particularly as the mobile web and video continue their march toward ubiquity. We have more options than ever—more content, more video, and more shopping. And while patience has increased slightly, people—whether they are Millennials, Gen X or Baby Boomers—all expect a personalized, highly-functioning web experience. If not, they will look elsewhere [emphasis added]. With the explosion in content, branded entertainment, video and e-commerce, the stakes are higher than ever.” (More details are available in the full report on the Limelight website.)*

**THE POSITION OF CTO IS NOT  
SIMPLY A POP CULTURE POSITION—  
IT’S ACTUALLY BEEN AROUND  
FOR A WHILE.**

A 2002 ground-breaking white paper by Tom Berray and Raj Sampath of Cabot Consultants in McLean, VA described the role of the CTO in four models:

- **The Infrastructure Manager**

Splitting roles with the CIO, the CTO keeps technology running in day-to-day management and operations but doesn’t make decisions about how IT will be used to support the organization.

- **The Big Thinker**

Contemplates long-term innovation and broadening strategic horizons of the company, envisions future paths but not always involved in concrete decision-making about these ideas.

- **The Technology Visionary and  
Operations Manager**

Usually found in a dot.com/tech-oriented company; responsible for determining how technology can be used to implement the business strategy.

- **The External-facing Technologist**

Focuses efforts on using technology to improve products and services for external customers/clients; the main role is to develop the strategic technology plan for the organization by identifying, tracking, and experimenting with new and potentially disruptive technologies.

*When respondents said the next “most important” staff member was the CTO, they were only reinforcing what both research studies and our “gut” was already telling us: from Millennials to Baby Boomers, the effective integration of technological leadership in our organizations is more important than ever.*

**EVEN THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HAS  
A CTO WHO EMBODIES THESE QUALITIES.**

In September 2014, President Obama named Megan Smith the United States Chief Technology Officer (CTO) in the Office of Science and Technology Policy. In this role, she serves as an Assistant to the President. As U.S. CTO, Smith focuses on how technology policy, data and innovation can advance the future of our nation.

SOURCE: WHITEHOUSE.GOV  
[tinyurl.com/jckyqsy](http://tinyurl.com/jckyqsy)

# SECTION 3: THE INTERPLAY OF THREE UNIQUE GENERATIONS

"THE NEW HIRE IS DRIVING ME CRAZY. SO ARROGANT :-/ NEED TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO WORK WITH THIS PERSON. MUST BE IN THEIR 40S. FIGURES."

**TEXT FROM BABY BOOMERS**

"OMG. THIS KHAKI WEARING GUY IS KILLING ME. WOULDN'T KNOW HOW TO TAKE A RISK IF IT HIT HIM IN THE FACE."

**TEXT FROM GEN X'ERS**

"IF THEY WOULD GIVE US A SHOT, WE COULD HELP THEM."

**TEXT FROM MILLENNIALS**

*How do we acknowledge and build on the unique strengths each generation brings to the workplace? And perhaps equally as important, how do we bridge the generational weaknesses that threaten the necessary collaboration in our organizations?*

*On the next page are the strengths and weaknesses respondents experienced while working alongside Millennials, Gen X/Ys, and Baby Boomers.*

# BRING IT TO WORK

## THE PERCEIVED STRENGTHS OF EACH GENERATION

MILLENNIALS	GEN X/Y	BABY BOOMERS
ENERGY	ENERGY	EXPERIENCE
CREATIVITY	EXPERIENCE	WISDOM
PASSION TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE	STABILITY	PERSPECTIVE
INNOVATION	MATURITY	DEDICATION
TECH SAVVY	LEADERS FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE	KNOWLEDGE

# LEAVE IT AT HOME

## THE PERCEIVED WEAKNESSES OF EACH GENERATION

MILLENNIALS	GEN X/Y	BABY BOOMERS
POOR WORK ETHIC	STUBBORNNESS	HOLDING ON
ENTITLEMENT	FAMILY ISSUES	LACK OF TECHNICAL ACUMEN
IMPATIENCE	INFLEXIBILITY	LATE ADOPTERS
LACK OF TRADITIONAL CHARACTER TRAITS	LACK OF EXECUTIVE PRESENCE	UNWILLING TO "GO NEW"
LACK OF "STICK-TO-IT-NESS"	RISK-AVERSE	TRAITS OF PHYSICAL OR INTELLECTUAL AGING



## MILLENNIALS

The strengths of Millennials (20-33 years) are overwhelmingly expressed in their energy, creativity and passion. Other strengths include innovation and technical knowledge. Weaknesses are perceived in their lack of work ethic, entitlement, impatience, and lack of traditional character traits (e.g. loyalty, teachability, faith foundations, respect for history, and “stick-to-it-ness”).

## GEN X/Ys

The strengths of Gen X/Ys (34-50 years) are expressed in their energy, experience, stability, and maturity; they are natural leaders who are focused on the future. Weaknesses are perceived in their stubbornness, the pull of family issues, inflexibility, a lack of executive presence, and an unwillingness to risk as they hold on to the past.

## BABY BOOMERS

The strengths of Baby Boomers (51-70 years) are overwhelmingly expressed in their experience and wisdom. Other strengths include the perspective they bring (including historical perspective), dedication to the organization (including work ethic), and knowledge. Weaknesses are perceived in the ways they hold on (to the past and to authority), their lack of technical acumen, being late adopters who are prideful about their past successes, their unwillingness to go “new” (including leadership, problem solving, acknowledging emerging cultural trends, embracing technology), and their exhibiting of characteristics of physical and intellectual aging (including anxiety, fear, low energy, inflexibility).

WHAT ARE WE AS LEADERS  
NOT DOING THAT IF WE DID  
IT, WOULD FUNDAMENTALLY  
CHANGE FOR THE BETTER, THE  
GENERATIONAL DYNAMICS IN OUR  
ORGANIZATIONS?

The African proverb, “It takes a whole village to raise a child,” underlines the communal and transgenerational effort of the extended family—and indeed, the village—in raising an individual. The individualism of American culture can cause us to separate the generations, prefer some over others, exclude rather than include the strengths—and yes, the weaknesses as well.

After all, no village with its parents, grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles, friends and neighbors is perfect at raising a child. But each generation, despite the weaknesses it may bring, is valued for its potential contributions.

“TWO PEOPLE ARE BETTER OFF THAN ONE,  
FOR THEY CAN HELP EACH OTHER  
SUCCEED”

**ECCLESIASTES 4:9 NLT**

## WATCH OUT FOR GENERALIZATIONS

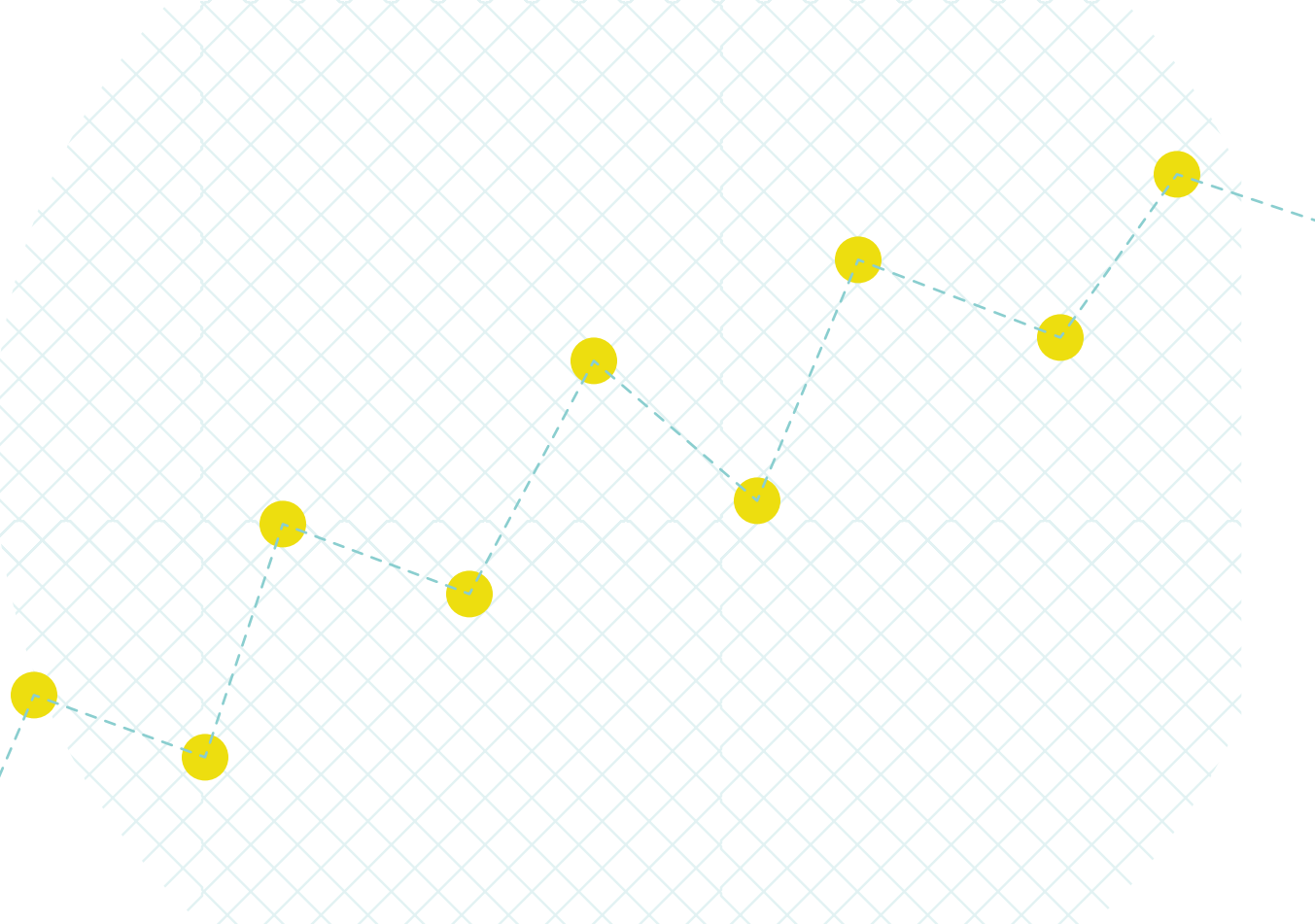
For example, some Internet articles will warn about the many myths around late tech-adopting Baby Boomers with regards to Internet interest, usage and, importantly, online giving. Ian Barker says, “It’s easy to assume that younger generations who have grown up with the Internet spend more time online, but new research suggests that this isn’t the case.

The 2015 State of the User Experience report from content delivery specialist, Limelight Networks, found that time spent online in the past year has dramatically increased, with 45 percent of respondents spending more than 15 hours a week on their laptop, tablet or phone. But perhaps surprisingly, the group spending the most time online is Baby Boomers, those aged 51-69. More than half (51 percent) are online 15 hours a week, as opposed to Millennials (18-33 year olds) at just 41 percent.” (Source: Betanews)

## AREAS IN WHICH GENERATIONS EXPRESS DISPROPORTIONATE CONCERN FOR THIS QUALITY OR SKILL AS BEING NEEDED IN NEXT LEADERS

Area of Concern	Millennials	Gen X/Y	Baby Boomers	Builders
Demonstrating genuine care for the staff	•			
Identifying and implementing needed innovations in our ministry strategy			•	
Discerning the times/understanding post-modern culture's impact on our organization				•
Hiring forward-leaning leaders			•	
Growing our organization				•
Younger leader development	•			
Staying the course theologically/biblically	•			
Getting measurable results/outcomes			•	
Identifying hidden leaders	•			
Refreshing the organizational culture	•			
Bridging generational gaps				•
Casting a fresh vision	•			
Passionate about life balance	•			
Moving forward with necessary hiring/firing				
Developing our digital footprint			•	
Raising funds from younger donor groups			•	
Committed to the cause at any personal cost			•	
Succession planning	•		•	
Interfacing with our Board				
Refreshing Board membership			•	
Resetting our structure		•		
Cleaning up an organizational mess				
Rebuilding our technology infrastructure				
Merging with or acquiring other similar organizations				
Downsizing				
Divesting assets				
Relocating our offices				

# SECTION 4: LOOKING FOR WHO LEADS NEXT



With 45% of respondents saying they're currently operating with 1-4 positions open on their senior leadership team (President, Vice President, Pastor, CEO, other C-suite, Director, Manager) and a little over half (53%) of respondents acknowledging they'll be replacing 1-2 senior leaders in the next five years, there's a clear need for top quality people to fill those roles.

But what's equally as important, if not more so, is the value of getting expert help in the search process. For most of our organizations, our reach beyond ourselves into a more diverse talent pool has its limits.

## WHEN ASKED HOW THEIR RECENT SEARCH FIRM EXPERIENCE WENT:

- **21% said it went rough and should have been planned better**
- **15% said it was a “train wreck in slow motion”**

We believe that, with the stakes as high as they are when it comes to identifying and recruiting the kind of next leaders this research points to, partnering with an experienced search firm with a robust reach and a sound process is no longer a luxury or added expense, but a necessity.

*“Spend a significant portion of time on people decisions: get the right people on the bus, get the right people in the right seats, get the wrong people off the bus, develop people into bigger seats, plan for succession, etc. Develop a disciplined, systematic process for getting the right people on the bus. With each passing year, ensure the percentage of people decisions that turn out good versus bad continues to rise.”*

**Wendy Maynard, Kinesis**

Forbes contributor Ekaterina Walter writes, “Diversity is critical for organizations’ ability to innovate and adapt in a fast-changing environment. Some of the most successful entrepreneurs and most admired leaders will tell you the same thing. Diversity is essential to the growth and prosperity of any company: diversity of perspectives, experiences, cultures, genders and age.

**WHY? BECAUSE DIVERSITY BREEDS INNOVATION. AND INNOVATION BREEDS BUSINESS SUCCESS.**

- **A Forbes study has identified workforce diversity and inclusion as a key driver of internal innovation and business growth.**
- **Lu Hong and Scott Page showed that groups of diverse problem solvers can outperform groups of high-ability problem solvers.**
- **According to McKinsey, companies with diverse executive boards enjoy significantly higher earnings and returns on equity.**
- **According to Harvard Business School, multicultural networks promote creativity.**

# SECTION 5: WHAT'S NEXT?



*The findings of this research suggest we live in “liminal time”—a threshold—a period of ambiguity, even disorientation between what’s tried-and-true, and a much-needed new way of thinking or doing. In such seasons it is not always more data we need, but more reflection.*

*Take a moment to envision yourself packing up your office on your last day in your position. You could have been at your desk for 19 years, nine years, or just a year. The room pulses with a mix of memories. The facts of this survey swirl in your mind. Your thoughts run ahead...*

## WHO SITS IN THIS CHAIR TOMORROW? SOMEONE DOWN THE HALL? SOMEONE NEW?

### Who's Leading Next?

Does my replacement have what it takes? If I left a letter in the drawer like presidents often do for the person about to take their place in the Oval Office, what would it say?

The research here at least offers a few clues into what the future holds for new leaders. Here are some questions for you to consider personally or as a group as you reflect on what's next.

### 1. WHAT IF YOU STARTED NOW?

Current leaders aren't prophets, and most aren't guessing in their responses. To answer as they did then means they saw enough of the future in the present to be able to articulate it. This represents opportunity both in the future—and in the present.

#### QUESTIONS:

- How can we, as current leaders, actively lead as if the future is today?
- Are we open to a coach who could help us do this?
- Do I need to address any burn-out issues to ensure I finish well?
- How do I/we view the value of using a search firm to help us identify the right leaders who will next lead this organization I/we care about

### 2. ADAPTIVE, NOT TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP, IS NEEDED FOR THE FUTURE

We're all experiencing life and work in what is now known as a "vuca" world—a term coined by the military to describe a situation that is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous.

*For more on this, read: What Vuca Really Means To You.  
<http://tinyurl.com/nhw3hja>*

The challenges that leaders see ahead require an extra something that is often intangible. That something extra seems to point us toward a different kind of leader—one who possesses the qualities and skills that this research suggests.

But there's an obstacle we have to address. Our tendency is to hire people to solve "technical" problems in our organizations, when in fact many organizational issues that result from working in a post-modern cultural context require adaptive leadership. On the following page you will see a comparison of technical problems and adaptive challenges. Leaders who can solve technical problems are abundant. But, this research really points to the need for future leaders who can lead well to address adaptive challenges—not a group in huge supply.

#### QUESTIONS:

- To what extent are we still hiring "modern" leaders versus "post-modern" leaders? To what degree is this a concern or issue to address?
- Think about the current or likely open leadership positions in your senior leadership team. What's needed? Is it more of a technical leadership role, adaptive leadership role, or something in between?
- Will a technical leader in those positions provide leadership for the future or simply offer you another year of survival? Which is most important at this point?
- What are we doing to identify and develop adaptive leaders? (For more on this topic, read *Developing Leaders in a Vuca Environment*) <http://tinyurl.com/jy4c7b5>

## THE WORK OF LEADERSHIP IS MORE THAN SOLVING TECHNICAL PROBLEMS

### TECHNICAL PROBLEMS

EASY TO IDENTIFY

OFTEN LEND THEMSELVES TO QUICK AND EASY (CUT-AND-DRIED) SOLUTIONS

CAN OFTEN BE SOLVED BY AN AUTHORITY OR EXPERT

REQUIRE CHANGE IN JUST ONE OR PERHAPS A FEW PLACES, OFTEN CONTAINED WITHIN DEPARTMENTAL OR ORGANIZATIONAL BOUNDARIES

SOLUTIONS CAN OFTEN BE IMPLEMENTED QUICKLY—EVEN BY EDICT

### ADAPTIVE CHALLENGES:

DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY (EASY TO DENY)

REQUIRE CHANGES IN VALUES, BELIEFS, ROLES, RELATIONSHIPS AND APPROACHES TO WORK

PEOPLE WITH THE PROBLEM DO THE WORK OF SOLVING IT

REQUIRE CHANGE IN NUMEROUS PLACES, USUALLY CROSS ORGANIZATIONAL BOUNDARIES

PEOPLE OFTEN RESIST EVEN ACKNOWLEDGING ADAPTIVE CHALLENGES

“SOLUTIONS” REQUIRE EXPERIMENTS AND NEW DISCOVERIES; THEY CAN TAKE A LONG TIME TO IMPLEMENT AND CANNOT BE IMPLEMENTED BY EDICT.

*Adapted from Ronald A. Heifetz & Donald L. Laurie, “The Work of Leadership,” Harvard Business Review, January-February 1997; and Ronald A. Heifetz & Marty Linsky, “Leadership on the Line,” Harvard Business School Press, 2002 (Source: GROUPEMITH)*



### 3. HABITS OF THE HEART

In the process of completing this survey, Dr. Tom Phillips, Vice President of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Director of the Billy Graham Library in North Carolina, shot us an email with a gentle but important reminder:

**SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE ARE GOOD, BUT HEART & HABITS ARE #1.**

His counsel raises the bar for those of us currently leading, and also for Who's Leading Next? You might hire the best adaptive leader, but if that leader has a low EQ or lacks humility or openness to God's Spirit and the voices of others (including those from other generations), he or she may not be the leader you need at all.

### QUESTIONS:

- **What generational tendencies do I personally exhibit that reflect some heart or habit shift that needs to be tended to?**
- **How open am I to a coach or spiritual director to walk with me for a season?**
- **What are we doing beyond offering to pay for an occasional seminar to truly develop the leaders we have in-house, right now, to lead next?**



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