

# CEO Survey: Understanding the Generation Gap

By Ethan Watters

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The lukewarm evaluations of CEOs also may point to a generation gap between typically baby boomer-era upper management and Gen X- and Gen Y-age employees and managers. Several experts pointed out that younger employees expect a more nurturing, less autocratic style of leadership.

“The old days of command and control are gone,” says Vistage International CEO Rafael Pastor. “A CEO can’t rely on the strength of his corporate structure to make things happen. Younger employees expect a level of collaboration and communication that their parents didn’t expect.”

Author Michael Abrashoff adds, “Today’s younger generation requires a new set of managerial skills. They want to know why you are doing things in a certain way and will only buy into a project if they understand why you are doing what your doing.”

This doesn’t mean that Generation X and Y employees aren’t capable of being great team players or that they don’t care about the company. When asked what they would like to discuss with their CEO if they had the chance, employees young and old showed a remarkable degree of selflessness. More than half said that they wanted to chat with the top boss about the company’s long-term vision or strategy. Less than one in four wanted to talk with the CEO about their personal career prospects or their salaries.

When asked what qualities they thought their CEO valued most, the vast majority of employees young and old chose answers like “integrity,” “delivering results,” “innovative thinking,” “honesty,” and “resourcefulness.” Fewer than one in 10 believed CEOs were impressed by smooth talkers or suck-ups.