

PROPOSED RESEARCH PROJECT

I have for many years focused on leadership training. In my teenage years I studied everything I could find on military leadership because it was my goal to be a military officer. I attended military school my first year in college, and went on to become the commander of my ROTC unit at The Ohio State University, where we had one of the largest cadet corps in the United States. I received one of only 133 pilot slots awarded nation wide my graduating year, and of those, 33% washed out of the training. I went on to become a successful pilot, military officer, and business leader. I have had many jobs. My formative adult years were spent in the military, holding many assignments, moving frequently, traveling often, and changing pace quickly. We are forced to adapt quickly to new environments.

I consider myself to be part of Generation Flux. This is a term that Fast Company's editor Robert Safian coined in 2012. It describes a mindset of people who are active and entrepreneurial. They seek stimulation and environments that they can shape, change and evolve. They typically hold a job for four years or less and then move on. Generation Flux is not an age group- it's a mindset.

Global issues, diverse people, fast-paced change and social media dominate modern business. There is immediate access to news and companies cannot hide behind unreadable financial filings. This presents a considerable leadership issue for executives. How do you run a company for a population that doubling about every 60 years? How do you find, obtain and retain talent if they are going to relocate every four years? How do you manage a company that has no secrets thanks to social media? I am fascinated by these topics. My thesis for my MBA centered on strategic management issues for the airline industry. Employee engagement, technology and communications were key to strategic success then. Today these values are still true, yet issues for leadership are rapidly changing. To create value for the customer there must first be value for the employee. Strategic advantage will go to the executive team who provides self-actualization to the individual employees first and then to the employee groups as a whole. This is far more challenging when the employee is the executive. Serial entrepreneurship is very common among the Millennials, and many more people of other age groups either identify with Generation Flux because of their adaptation to this mindset or by being forced into entrepreneurship due to a depressed global economy.

This project will involve aspects of business evaluation not typically analyzed when discussing leadership and strategy. I will incorporate a great deal of the human sciences into my research. Psychology and Sociology greatly help explain the motivations of work groups and individuals. It is imperative to consider how communities influence business, both at the employee level and at the executive level. It is imperative to incorporate global issues as well. Even if a company is small and only provides local service, they probably use resources that are global in nature, outsource some work globally, have an international social media presence or will work with someone from a different cultural background. The study of the social sciences is highly overlooked in business analysis. Strategy development and considerations of what success means to a business take on whole new meanings when viewed through the lens of societal concern. Organizational behavior is influenced by the psychological makeup of the individuals

charged with launching and maintaining the company's programs but also by the example that leadership sets.

I have discussed this topic with Dr. Leslie Danehy. She is the founder and CEO of Danehy & Associates, an Emotional Intelligence consulting firm. We talked about the advantages that businesses have when they take care to ensure that they are properly articulating their vision. To communicate properly to customers, companies must continually ask "Do they see what we see? Do they feel what we feel? Is our message getting across like we want it to?" Businesses typically do not go to these lengths. Similarly with employees, particularly the Millennials and Generation Flux people who are more creative and impatient, companies must resolutely commit to engaging in open communication. These groups want to talk more than listen and are focused on their vision of the world. Their self-actualization is in the pursuit, not necessarily the achievement. This will make a good base for incorporating the psychological motivations of such employees into the discussion on corporate business strategy.

Another expert with significant background on the subject is Dr. Kathleen Gosser. Dr. Gosser is herself a Generation Flux constituent. She is the Director of Operations Excellence at KFC Corporation. Additionally, she has a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Organizational Development. She is on several Boards of Directors and teaches master's level courses at three universities. We together serve on the Board of Directors for MBA Women International (Louisville Chapter) and passionately discuss membership motivation and employee leadership development.

Dr. Frank Rothaermel was my professor of economics at Georgia Institute of Technology. He was my advisor for our Global Strategy Project. His research area is in strategy, innovation and entrepreneurship. We have generally discussed my interests in this topic, and he has many strategy papers that will be of great help in my research. He will be a good resource and mentor for me during this journey.

I am an avid reader of leadership articles, business magazines, research journals and business publications. I read a lot of Harvard Business Review and McKinsey articles. The writing at Forbes, Inc., and Fast Company although meant more for the business enthusiast as opposed to the research student, is centered on many of these topics about generational divides, leadership strategy and engaging business. In particular, Robert Safian's Fast Company dissertation about Generation Flux was an inspiration in focusing my research interests.

I intend to publish a book about "New Leadership", as I feel this topic will have broad appeal to the millions of Generation Flux members and serial entrepreneurs. This research will be useful to the more traditional leaders as well, as the typical company CEO is an older white male running a traditional company with a typical business model. They need to understand the changing face of their employee groups and how to motivate them. We continue to talk about "employee engagement" but never truly achieve it. Engaged employees are likely the ones out there creating their own businesses, because that is what they are passionate about. They have already self-actualized, or are on their way to it, because they do not delineate between their personal and their professional lives. The non-engaged employee goes to work. The engaged employee conversely has lifestyle that involves work that they are proud of. Engaged employees

find and feel purpose. This is not something that a business strategy set forth by the Human Resources department can solve.

I am at the initial stages of formal information gathering, and will probably need help further focusing my thesis. There is a significant gap in the market of leadership development or business strategy material that addresses this particular blend of topic. Employee engagement, effective communication, and self-actualization are more social and psychological issues, and literary material is far behind in addressing these topics as business development imperatives. Workforces are getting younger as the population explodes, so this is a critical turning point for executive leaders. Large traditional companies must learn to adapt to the upcoming drove of Generation Fluxers. The global economy and energetic young workforce has conspired to create a new class of labor. They are media savvy, socially adept, and oddly proficient at global business. There is now the need for this “New Leadership”.

I consider myself a member of Generation Flux. True to topic, I would like to integrate aspects of this personality type into my research and performance. I am an early adopter of social media and belong to most of the platforms. I would like to keep my streams updated with my progress and hopefully find an audience who will not only read but also participate. Social input will be an interesting perspective. Additionally, I intend to be able to adapt my thesis into a book and publish it. I might also submit similar articles for publication in magazines or websites along the way. (I already write for the Levo League and Cake&Whiskey Magazine). Not only will this provide motivation along the way, but it will also serve as an indicator to how the research is accepted by others of a similar mindset (i.e. other Generation Fluxers).