INFLUENCED BY OTHERS: Bases of Power Across Employee Generations
# Contents

Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 3

Perceptions of Leadership ........................................................................................................... 8

Managerial Bases of Power ......................................................................................................... 11

Integrity and Trust Perceptions .................................................................................................. 14

Perceptions of Co-Workers ....................................................................................................... 17

Co-Worker Bases of Power ......................................................................................................... 17

Trust Perceptions ....................................................................................................................... 21

Key Findings ............................................................................................................................... 23

Research Demographics ............................................................................................................ 24

Demographics – Supervisors ...................................................................................................... 24

Demographics - Survey Respondents ......................................................................................... 25

Demographics – Companies ....................................................................................................... 26

About This Research .................................................................................................................. 28

About The Center for Leadership Studies (CLS) ...................................................................... 28

About Training Industry .............................................................................................................. 28
Introduction

Leadership development is one of the most important types of development investments an organization can make. In most cases, leadership training endeavors to accomplish two overarching objectives: to provide leaders and managers with the tools to influence the work behavior of others, and to help them appropriately cultivate and exercise their power to affect change as effectively as possible. There are certainly other aspects to leadership such as strategic decision-making and managing conflict, but these elements are arguably of little worth without the capability to affect the behavior of the workforce and subsequently direct that behavior toward business objectives. Accordingly, power in an organization can be conceptualized as the potential to influence others.

In Q4 2015, Training Industry, Inc. and The Center for Leadership Studies conducted research on how leadership development programs prepare managers to exercise influence,\(^1\) in addition to the extent to which bases of power (defined to the right) are perceived by managers to lead to behavior change in employees. In that study, managerial respondents were also asked which bases of power they found to be most effective across three generational cohorts: millennials (age 18-33), Generation X (age 34-49), and baby boomers (age 50-68). What was found was that while managers felt employees unilaterally responded to attempts to influence their behavior, there were slight differences in which approaches were assumed to work best with each generation.

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While leadership development continues to be an area of investment for many organizations, many employees may not directly experience the training programs their employer provides for its leaders. Recent research\(^2\) has shown that the competence of a manager may be the strongest predictor of followers’ attitudes about their job. Accordingly, the perceived effectiveness of leadership development programs by followers provides insight into the perceptions of their manager and leadership in general within their company.

Survey respondents were asked to provide a rating, to the best of their knowledge, as to the effectiveness of leadership development programs for their direct supervisors. As shown below in Figure 1, 73 percent of respondents rated their company’s leadership training for their manager or supervisor as effective. This indicates that the bulk of followers perceive leadership training to have a net positive effect on managerial behavior.

**Figure 1.** Perceived Leadership Training Effectiveness

![Perceived Leadership Training Effectiveness](image)

Of particular interest is whether there were differences in follower perceptions of leadership development quality when looking across age groups of employees. The results in Figure 2 display the extrapolation of these data across generations for “very effective” ratings, suggesting that millennials tend to have a more positive perception of leadership development quality. This may be due to their comparative lack of exposure to different companies and organizational cultures compared to older employee cohorts, or may be attributable to simply having less experience with effective and ineffective leaders in the early stages of their careers. Whatever the underlying reason, the figure shows a clear downward trend in perceptions of leadership development training such that ratings become less favorable with increasing follower age.

Figure 2. Perceived Leadership Training as “Very Effective,” by Employee Generation

Why would follower perceptions of leadership development programs be relevant to the way influence functions in the workplace? A leader-follower dynamic is not unidirectional, where influence only emanates from the manager to the follower. Instead, leadership influence is both direct and indirect, distributed across time, often affected by the perceptions of others, and positive perceptions of leadership do not necessarily indicate the presence of an effective leader.³ Further, leadership is one of several important determinants of job attitudes such as satisfaction.⁴ Respondents were asked a series of questions about their attachment to the organization they work for and the extent to which they trust both management and their peers.

A measure of organizational commitment by Meyer and Allen (2004)⁵ was used to assess affective, continuance and normative commitment to respondents’ employers. Organizational commitment, in a general sense, represents the continuum of attachment an employee feels between him or herself and an employer. More specifically, organizational commitment is comprised of three facets that describe the type of attachment between employee and employer: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. An employee who has high levels on these facets can be characterized by the following statements: “I really like working here” (affective commitment), “I’m here because I can’t afford to leave” (continuance commitment), and “I feel an obligation to my company/professional peers” (normative commitment). Each facet of organizational commitment was measured with six questions, using five-point Likert-type response options from

³ Lord, R. G., & Dinh, J. E. (2014). What have we learned that is critical in understanding leadership perceptions and leader-performance relations? Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 7, 158-177.
“strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Of these facets, continuance commitment received the highest average scale score (3.38), followed by affective (3.24) and normative commitment (3.22).

Below, Figure 3 shows the data for organizational commitment crossed by ratings of leadership training effectiveness. As can be seen, employees who perceived the leadership training at their company as effective also tended to have higher scale scores for affective and normative commitment. This suggests a relationship between the reasons an employee feels committed to their job and their employer with the perceived quality of leadership development programs. Namely, effective leader training may contribute to fostering emotional and social bonds between an employee and their work. It is notable that continuance commitment, which can be seen as a cost-benefit evaluation of staying in a job, does not show a pronounced pattern based on leadership training perceptions.

**Figure 3. Organizational Commitment by Leadership Training Effectiveness**

![Figure 3](image)

Figure 4 on the following page shows the results broken down by respondent generation, showing small differences for organizational commitment across generational cohorts. For instance, boomers rated slightly lower on normative commitment compared to younger employees—in particular, boomers were found to be significantly different from millennials on normative commitment\(^6\). However, no other differences between generations of employees were statistically significant for affective or continuance commitment\(^7\). Cumulatively, these results suggest that relative levels of commitment between generations are comparable, with the exception of normative commitment.

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\(^6\) Based on one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the effect of employee generation on normative commitment, \(F(2, 476) = 3.27, p < 0.05\).

\(^7\) Based on one-way ANOVAs for the effect of employee generation on affective commitment, \(F(2, 476) = 0.77, p = 0.50\), and continuance commitment, \(F(2, 476) = 2.47, p = 0.09\).
The results of earlier research revealed several important questions about the follower side of the leadership dynamic. Such as, how do followers see these same sources of influence from their managers? Earlier research found that legitimate power (i.e., the perception that a manager’s attempts to influence and decisions are appropriate for someone with that title or role) was endorsed as the most likely reason followers respond to managers. As will be shown later in this report, followers see themselves as responding more to managers based on earned trust and respect as well as perceived expertise—rather than ascribing such qualities to a manager simply due to his or her title. Another question concerns whether generations of employees share a tendency to respond to attempts to influence to the same degree? Although previous research showed differences in the perceived impact of the bases of power from the manager perspective, it cannot be assumed that followers share the same viewpoint on the reasons they respond to a supervisor’s attempts to influence their behavior. Finally, do followers respond differentially to bases of power when interacting with each other in a peer-to-peer dynamic?

To examine these issues, Training Industry, Inc. and The Center for Leadership Studies conducted a study to examine how followers react to their leaders, peers and employer. In Q4 2015, 479 respondents completed a confidential survey reporting their perceptions of the leadership development in their company, their managers’ effectiveness, their manager’s ability to influence their behavior, as well as their co-workers’ ability to influence their behavior. A stratified sampling strategy was utilized to recruit participants for this research, such that the proportion of respondents across three generational categories (i.e., millennials, Generation X, and baby boomers) was approximately equal in order to provide equal representation to all age demographics.
Perceptions of Leadership

Establishing that leadership development programs are generally perceived favorably by the followers of managers engaged in such training, of interest was the ways in which the skills learned in training translate to effective leadership. Though not an exhaustive list of all possible manifestations of managerial effectiveness, Figure 5 below shows consistently positive overall endorsement for a selection of leadership activities. As can be seen, 79 percent of respondents felt that their supervisors are effective at managing their work, 67 percent are effective at facilitating professional development, 73 percent are effective at managing co-workers, and 73 percent are effective at being an advocate with other leaders and stakeholders.

**Figure 5. Managerial Effectiveness at Leadership Activities**

![Managerial Effectiveness Chart](chart.png)

It is notable that for the leadership activities shown in Figure 5, there was a pronounced effect when data were crossed by the perceived effectiveness of leadership development training. Followers who rated their company’s leadership development as “very effective” (N = 142) subsequently rated their manager as “very effective” at least 70 percent of the time across all four activities. In contrast, followers who rated leadership development as ineffective (N = 119) only endorsed “very effective” ratings between 6 and 12 percent for leadership activities.

The data for managerial effectiveness were explored further by decomposing respondents’ ratings by their generational cohort. Seen below in Figure 6, considering “very effective” ratings across age groups shows that boomers are markedly less positive about leader activities than younger groups. This was particularly notable for facilitating professional development and cross-department advocacy. Conversely, millennials again have a slightly more favorable perception of their managers compared to older generations of workers.
Following ratings of general leader activities, respondents were asked in greater detail about their supervisors’ approach to professional development and what is prioritized in the experience of training. The components of the training experience being rated were abstracted from the Kirkpatrick\(^8\) model of training evaluation, with the addition of Alliger et al.’s (1997)\(^9\) suggested expansion of learner reactions into two criteria of affective and utility reactions. In other words, respondents were asked to evaluate their managers’ emphasis on Kirkpatrick’s training outcomes, as follows (with accompanying prompts from the survey instrument):

- **Level 1 (Reactions)**
  - Affective/emotional reactions
    - “My supervisor/manager cares that I enjoy the experience of training initiatives.”
  - Utility reactions
    - “My supervisor/manager cares that I find the experience of training initiatives to be useful.”

- **Level 2 (Learning)**
  - “My supervisor/manager cares that I learned skills/knowledge from training initiatives.”

- **Level 3 (Behavioral transfer)**
  - “My supervisor/manager cares that I can apply skills/knowledge from training initiatives to my current role.”

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Level 4 (Results)

- "My supervisor/manager cares about the positive business impact of my participation in training initiatives."

As can be seen in Figure 7, employees perceived their managers putting the most emphasis on the transfer of learned skills to the employees’ current roles (79 percent “agree” ratings). Though all outcomes were endorsed positively by the majority of respondents, it is noteworthy that enjoying the training experience and finding it useful (i.e., affective and utility reactions, respectively) received the highest cumulative “disagree” ratings compared to higher-order learning outcomes. This suggests that employees believe their managers are slightly less concerned with immediate reactions to training than they are with the impact the training will have on job behaviors and business outcomes.

Figure 7. Perceptions of Training Outcomes

As before, these results were explored across generations. As shown in Figure 8, which represents “strongly agree” ratings, millennials again had a more positive perception of their manager’s attitude to training outcomes compared to older cohorts of employees. Concurrently, Generation X employees had more positive perceptions compared to boomers across training outcomes. Across all generations, the transfer of learned skills to employees’ roles received the highest percentage of “strongly agree” ratings.
Managerial Bases of Power

The reasons why followers respond to the requests of their managers was examined by administering a scale that measures managers’ bases of power, which is a framework that characterizes the various avenues through which influence attempts succeed or fail across different situations. The seven bases of power as used in this research and operationalized by The Center for Leadership Studies are defined as follows:

- **Coercive** power is based on the perception that one can administer consequences for unacceptable behavior.
- **Connection** power is based on the perception that one is associated with important and influential people.
- **Reward** power is based on the perception that one can distribute rewards and recognition.
- **Legitimate** power is based on the perception that one’s influence attempts and decisions are appropriate for someone with one’s title or role.
- **Referent** power is based on the perception that one displays behaviors and personal characteristics that earn the respect and trust of others.
- **Information** power is based on the perception that one has access to information that is valuable to others.
- **Expert** power is based on the perception that one possesses subject matter knowledge, judgment and experience.

It should be noted that power can be formally granted to an individual by an organization, or informally gained through interactions with others. In practice, attempts to influence the behavior of others typically relies on a combination of these seven sources, such that they are
interdependent and representative of a process of influence that occurs over time. As shown in Figure 9, respondents reported they were “Extremely likely” to comply when asked to do their job differently by a supervisor were based on referent and expert power. In other words, behavior change could be most likely to occur because a manager has built trust and respect, as well as possessing expert knowledge and judgment. Combining “Extremely likely” and “ Likely” ratings, expert power (80%) and information power (76%) were the dominant sources of influence, followed by legitimate (72%) and coercive power (72%).

**Figure 9. Bases of Power (Manager)**

Notable in the above figure is that no single basis of power received a preponderance of “unlikely” ratings. This suggests that although some bases of power may be perceived by followers as the most likely reason they comply with managerial requests, the influence of their supervisors on their work behavior can take many forms and be comprised of several of the bases of power acting in concert. In short, successful applications of the bases of power may depend on some combination of the situational dynamics and environment in which influence is being exerted.

Further, when considering follower ratings for the bases of power across employees who indicated their company has a “very effective” leadership development program versus those who rated leadership development as “ineffective” or “very ineffective,” pronounced differences were found with respect to the proportion of “extremely likely” ratings for each basis of power. As can be seen in Figure 10, for ineffective leadership development programs, follower ratings ranged between 13 and 24 percent across all bases of power, whereas for the most effective leadership development programs, between 51 and 66 percent of followers endorsed the “extremely likely” response option. This suggests that the more effective the leadership development programs in place within an organization, the better prepared leaders may be to influence the behavior of followers to achieve business goals—and the more receptive those followers will be to direction.
As before, we explored the data on bases of power further based on employee generational cohorts. As seen in Figure 11, referent and expert power were still the top two bases of power within each generation. However, relative levels of endorsement for “extremely likely” ratings shows a definite trend across generations such that millennials are much more likely to respond to all bases of power compared to Generation X and boomer employees. Echoing results from earlier in this report, boomers were substantially less likely to respond to nearly all bases of power compared to younger employees with the exception of expert power.
Integrity and Trust Perceptions

Next, respondents were asked a series of items about their perceptions of the integrity of their manager or direct supervisor/superior. Perceived integrity can be defined as “the perceived consistency of a leader’s words and deeds as well as the perceived consistency of these deeds with the values shared by the leader and the follower.”10 This concept has shown strong connections to related organizational attitudes such as trust and honesty, but is distinct in that it focuses mainly on the consistency between values, behavior and communications with others.

Leader integrity, while wholly subjective, can be seen as a substitute for information about leadership outcomes or a predictive crutch in the face of uncertainty about decision-making and leadership efforts.11 Although leaders have been shown to rate themselves highly on integrity, particularly those in executive roles, their followers often fail to share the same perception and similarly high ratings.12 As will be shown, however, follower perceptions may also differ across generations.

To collect ratings of integrity perceptions, nine items were used from the short-form of the Perceived Leadership Integrity Scale (sPLIS; Whelan et al., 2014.13) The items in this scale are negatively worded and sensitive to measuring integrity via levels of disagreement with each prompt. In other words, this scale is intended to provide insight into leadership integrity by describing what destructive behaviors leaders are not likely to do as opposed to attempting to catalog integrity behaviors that not all followers may have the opportunity to observe.

As can be seen in Figure 12 on the following page, most items did not receive high proportions of agreement, with the exception of the “would risk me to protect himself/herself” item stem. This suggests that with the possible exclusion of self-protection motives, the majority of employees believe their managers generally act with integrity. In other words, the majority of employees do not identify supervisors with the negative qualities represented by the nine items in the sPLIS, consistent with the intended application of the measurement scale.

11 Ibid.
Taking ratings of leadership development effectiveness into account, patterns of agreement with the items (in other words, negative integrity ratings) were generally within a few percentage points of each other, with two exceptions. First, the item “would fire people just because (s)he doesn’t like them...” was endorsed slightly more by followers who rated their companies’ leadership development programs as ineffective. Second, the item “would risk me to protect himself/herself in work matters” was endorsed by nearly twice as many followers who rated their companies’ leadership development as ineffective compared to ratings from followers who feel leadership training programs are effective.

**Figure 13. Perceived Leadership Integrity by Employee Generation**
As before, integrity data were explored by generational cohort, although in this instance the results represent “strongly agree” and “agree” ratings at the undesirable end of the response scale. As shown in Figure 13 on the previous page, millennials tend to think their managers are vengeful more often than older generations of employees. Generation X employees, on the other hand, are more likely to believe their managers lie and would be likely to fire co-workers. Lastly, boomers are most likely to assume managers would risk employees to protect themselves.

Next, organizational trust was assessed using 12 items from Cook and Wall (1980). This measure of trust distinguishes two forms of interpersonal trust in the workplace: faith in the trustworthy intentions of others, and confidence in the ability of others. These two forms of trust are further crossed by two rating targets, co-workers/peers and management, to provide insight into how employees conceptualize both the intent and capability of those around them. Scale scores for this set of questions (rated on seven-point Likert-type response options from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”) represent four facets of trust in the workplace, with the midpoint (i.e., a rating of 4) representing a neutral stance.

Across all respondents, the results showed a clear positive trend in favor of co-workers, such that faith in peers (5.00) and confidence in peers (4.88) were slightly but significantly higher overall compared with faith in management (4.56) and confidence in management (4.54). Given the scale scores, however, this suggests that while peers are seen as being more trustworthy than managers, the overall level of trust in management still falls on the positive side of the spectrum of responses (e.g., the average trends positive).

To explore this data further, trust perceptions of managers were examined across employee generations. As shown in Figure 14 on the following page, when considering trust in management across generations, boomers rated the highest on faith and confidence in their managers. In addition, the average scores for millennials and Generation X employees were approximately equal on both faith in management and confidence in management. It should be noted, however, that none of the differences between generations were statistically significant, demonstrating that relative levels of trust in management are consistent across employee age groups.

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15 Paired t-tests were conducted between peer and management rating targets. Average scale scores for peers were significantly different from average scale scores of management for both faith in intentions, t(478) = 7.16, p < 0.01, and for confidence in ability, t(478) = 5.18, p < 0.01.

16 Based on one-way ANOVAs for the effect of employee generation on faith in management, F(2, 476) = 0.82, p = 0.44, and confidence in management, F(2, 476) = 0.47, p = 0.63.
In summary, this section highlights a number of important points about followers’ perceptions of leaders. First, transfer of learned skills to application on the job was seen as the most important outcome of training to followers. Second, followers respond to all bases of power, but in particular endorsed referent and expert power as the most salient sources of managerial influence. In nearly all instances, these perceptions were most pronounced for millennials and least pronounced for boomers. Third, the majority of followers believe their managers to work with integrity, and generally trust in both the intentions and capabilities of management in their company.

**Perceptions of Co-Workers**

**Co-Worker Bases of Power**

Although influence in organizations is commonly conceptualized as a leader-follower dynamic, there are instances where interpersonal influence functions outside of the formal structure of a leadership hierarchy. In other words, how do the bases of power function when position power is unlikely to be an influence driver? After ratings were collected on the bases of power from the perspective of followers, respondents were asked to rate the same items, but this time with co-workers as the rating target. Note that the full sample responded to these questions, so each generational cohort of co-workers was rated by all 479 survey respondents.

First, respondents rated the seven bases of power as they pertain to why they might respond to a co-worker request when that co-worker is between the ages of 18 and 33 years. Figure 15 on the following page shows that expert and referent power were the most likely reasons that an employee would respond to a millennial co-worker. Unsurprisingly, coercive and reward power were the least likely reasons an employee would respond, as these are typically granted to an individual (namely a supervisor) by the organization instead of fostered via informal means.
Figure 15. Bases of Power (Millennial Co-workers)

Compared to the pattern of bases of power with managers as the target, these results show that millennial co-workers are able to influence those around them, but primarily through building trust, confidence, as well as earning a reputation as an expert. However, crossing "extremely likely" ratings with respondent generations suggests a pronounced effect for millennials responding to their peers, as shown in Figure 16. As can be seen, boomers and Generation X employees emphasize earned perceptions of referent and expert power. Millennials emphasize these two sources of influence to a greater degree, in addition to including aspects of informal and formal social hierarchies in the workplace such as coercive and legitimate power.

Figure 16. Bases of Power (Millennial Co-workers)
Second, respondents rated the seven bases of power as they pertain to why they might respond to a co-worker request when that co-worker is between the ages of 34 and 49 years. Again, as seen in Figure 17, referent and expert power were the most likely reasons that an employee would respond to a request by a Generation X co-worker, although information and legitimate power are more prominent than with millennial co-workers. Following the same pattern as ratings for millennials, coercive and reward power were endorsed as the least likely sources of influence.

**Figure 17. Bases of Power (Generation X Co-workers)**

As before, when the “extremely likely” ratings were explored by generation as shown in Figure 18, millennials were most likely to respond to Generation X co-workers, with the notable inclusion of reward power absent from Figure 16. For Generation X peers and boomer co-workers, however, the pattern of results remains relatively consistent with Figure 15, with a slight rise in information power.

**Figure 18. Bases of Power (Generation X Co-workers)**
Next, respondents rated the seven bases of power as they pertain to why they might respond to a co-worker request when that co-worker is between the ages of 50 and 68 years. Although referent and expert power are still primary reasons that a co-worker would take the suggestion of a boomer, all other sources of influence are much more pronounced than with younger generational cohorts, as can be seen below in Figure 19. These results show that boomers have more avenues of influence with co-workers compared to their younger counterparts.

**Figure 19.** Bases of Power (Boomer Co-workers)

![Chart showing bases of power for boomers.](image)

Finally, “extremely likely” ratings for boomers were explored by generational cohorts, as displayed in Figure 20 on the following page. As shown, boomers are still the least likely to respond to boomer co-workers through a basis of power other than referent and expert power. A notable difference from other generations’ results is the convergence of ratings from millennials and Generation X employees on reward, referent, and information power for boomer co-workers. These results suggest that while there may again be several avenues of influence for boomers when interacting with younger co-workers, boomers are best able to exert influence through referent and expert bases power when interacting with other boomers.

Taking the results of all three generational cohorts in tandem, a clear pattern of co-worker influence emerges. First, referent and expert power, both of which are relatively informal in origin, appear to be the main drivers of influence between co-workers, regardless of generation. This is true to varying degrees, however, as millennials are more likely to attribute earned respect and trust to co-workers compared to older generations. Further, across generations there is a trend such that co-workers older than a respondent’s own cohort tend to be rated more favorably on bases of power. In other words, if a respondent is rating whether they respond to various sources of co-worker influence, a co-worker in a generation above the respondent tended to receive higher ratings.
It bears mentioning, however, that in all co-worker results, none of the bases of power garnered ratings that matched the magnitude of endorsement when a manager was the rating target (see Figure 10). This suggests that while influence between co-workers (referent and expert power in particular) is a factor that impacts workplace behavior, the effect of the seven bases of power are of greater consequence in the context of a supervisor-follower dynamic.

**Trust Perceptions**

As described earlier in the section on leadership perceptions, organizational trust was assessed using 12 items from Cook and Wall (1980). This measure of trust distinguishes two forms of interpersonal trust in the workplace: faith in the trustworthy intentions of others, and confidence in the ability of others. As noted earlier, scale scores for these four indicators of trust at work (rated on 7-point Likert-type response options from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”) showed a statistically significant difference in favor of co-workers, such that faith in peers (5.00) and confidence in peers (4.88) were higher compared with faith in management (4.56) and confidence in management (4.54), respectively.

As shown in Figure 21 on the following page, boomers rated the highest on faith and confidence in both their peers and managers. Conversely, millennials rated the lowest on all forms of trust with the exception of confidence in management. However, again the differences between generations of employees were not significantly different, showing that as with trust in management, trust in co-workers is relatively stable across employee age groups.

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**Figure 20. Bases of Power (Boomer Co-workers)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bases of Power</th>
<th>Millennial, N = 160</th>
<th>Generation X, N = 167</th>
<th>Boomer, N = 152</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coercive</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimate</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referent</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 21. Trust Perceptions**


18 Based on one-way ANOVAs for the effect of employee generation on faith in peers, $F(2, 476) = 1.78, p = 0.17$, and confidence in peers, $F(2, 476) = 2.12, p = 0.12$. 

21
Figure 21. Organizational Trust (Co-Workers)
Key Findings

- 73 percent of followers rated the leadership development programs provided to their managers/direct supervisors as “Very effective” or “Somewhat effective.”
- There’s a downward trend in perceptions of leadership development training such that ratings become less favorable with increasing follower age.
  - Millennials tend to have a more positive perception of leadership development quality (36%) than Generation X (29%) and boomers (24%).
- The transfer of learned skills to employee’s roles received the highest percentage of “strongly agree” ratings across all generations: millennial (51%), Generation X (41%) and boomer (30%).
  - Employees perceived their managers to put the most emphasis on the transfer of learned skill to the employees’ current roles (79% “agree” ratings).
  - Enjoying the training experience (12%) and finding it useful (11%) received the highest cumulative “disagree” suggesting that employees believe their managers are slightly less concerned with immediate reactions to training than they are with the impact the training will have on job behaviors and business outcomes.
- Leaders are better prepared to influence the behavior of followers and followers are more receptive to direction when effective leadership development programs are in place within an organization.
- Across generations, referent, expert, and legitimate power emerged as three of the most important bases of power used by leaders to influence workplace behavior.
  - Expert power: millennial (48%), Generation X (38%) and boomer (37%)
  - Referent power: millennial (46%), Generation X (40%) and boomer (34%)
  - Legitimate power: millennial (42%), Generation X (34%) and boomer (26%)
  - Expert, reference, and legitimate power were the most effective bases of power in companies with the most effective leadership development programs
- The majority of followers believe their managers to work with integrity, and generally trust in both the intentions and capabilities of management in their company.
- Referent and expert power appear to be the main drivers of influence between co-workers, regardless of generation.
  - Across generations, co-workers older than a respondent’s own cohort tend to be rated more favorably on bases of power.
- While influence between co-workers, more specifically referent and expert power, is a factor that impacts workplace behavior, the effect of all seven bases of power are of greater consequence in the context of a supervisor-follower dynamic, showing the importance of both personal power and position power to these interactions.
- In regards to organizational trust, results showed that employees have slightly more faith and confidence in their peers than in management, but these perceptions do not significantly vary across generations.
Research Demographics

Demographics – Supervisors

Given the focus on this research on perceptions across generations of employees, it is informative to know the distribution of ages for the managers who comprise the rating targets for respondents. Figure 22 below shows the range of approximate ages for managers as reported by followers, whereby 69 percent of managers for respondents were over the age of 40. Bearing in mind that the sampling strategy for this research was stratified to have an equal number of respondents in each follower generational group (i.e., each generation represents a third of the whole sample), the ages of managers does not follow the same pattern. As shown, 14 percent of managers were millennials, 56 percent were Generation Xers, and 30 percent were boomers. It should be noted that the proportion of each generation who reported a manager over the age of 40 increases across groups, such that 56 percent of millennials have a manager over 40, compared to 72 percent for Generation X employees and 80 percent for boomers. This can be ascribed to older workers tending to have more career growth and potentially being supervised higher in organizational hierarchies.

Figure 22. Age of Manager/Supervisor

A vital part of an employee’s perceptions of their workplace is the work environment and the nature of his or her interactions with a manager. To that end, this research sought to describe the context in which communication with leadership tends to occur. As shown in Figure 23, most interactions were digital (or at least blended between digital and in-person), there tends to be a mix of individual- and team-based managerial dynamics, and supervisors and followers are not necessarily co-located.
Figure 23. Supervisory Communication

Demographics – Survey Respondents

Figures 24 and 25 provide context on the 479 survey respondents who participated in this research. The figures that follow summarize the breadth of functional areas/departments subsequently supported by their roles within the organization.

Figure 24. Departments Represented
Demographics – Companies

Figures 26 through 28 provide context on the companies of the 479 survey respondents who participated in this research.

Given that this research explores differences between generational cohorts, respondents were asked to indicate the demographic composition of their company to provide further context to their ratings. As shown in Figure 26, most companies have a large Generation X presence, followed by millennials and boomers.

Figure 26. Demographic Composition for Employee Generations
The figures that follow summarize the companies the respondents signify with respect to the total number of employees and representation by primary industry.

**Figure 27. Organizational Size**

26% Under 1k
74% Over 1k

**Figure 28. Industries Represented**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health care/Medical/Pharma</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durable Goods/Consumables</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking/Finance/Insurance</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology/Telecom</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment/Hospitality</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Services/Consulting</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
About This Research

About The Center for Leadership Studies (CLS)

For more than 45 years, The Center for Leadership Studies (CLS), founded by Dr. Paul Hersey, has been the global home of the original Situational Leadership® Model. With over 14 million leaders trained, Situational Leadership® is the most successful and widely adopted leadership model available. Deployed in more than 70% of Fortune 500 companies, Situational Leadership® transcends cultural and generational differences and equips leaders around the globe with the skills necessary to address a specific challenge, drive behavior change and increase productivity. CLS’ diverse product portfolio includes a comprehensive off-the-shelf leadership curriculum in addition to more than 30 years’ experience designing and developing award-winning custom training solutions. CLS services customers both domestically and internationally through an extensive network comprised of over 200 learning professionals in more than 35 countries.

For more information, go to www.situational.com, call 919.335.8763, or email us at info@situational.com.

About Training Industry

Our focus is on helping dedicated business and training professionals get the information, insight and tools needed to more effectively manage the business of learning. Our website, TrainingIndustry.com, spotlights the latest news, articles, case studies and best practices within the training industry.

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