# THE EMERGING LEADER

**Identify, Ignite and Retain Your Company's Next Generation of Leaders**

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# The Emerging Leader:
## Identify, Ignite and Retain
## Your Company's Next Generation of Leaders

# Section III – Develop and Leverage Your Emerging Leaders 103

# Section IV – Coaching ELs to Success

## Who Are the Emerging Leaders in Your Organization?

To answer this question, we must first define leadership. Seth Godin said it best:

'Leadership is not management. Management is about utilizing known resources most effectively to get a defined job done. Management is all about efficiency. Burger King hires managers. **Leadership, on the other hand, is about creating change that you believe in.** Leaders have followers. Managers have employees. Managers make widgets. Leaders make change.'

'Embracing change' has become a cliché. It's merely the ante to get into the game of business today. Seeing what's needed and *making change happen* is the new predictor of leadership success. Act or be acted on.

***Emerging Leaders*** **(ELs) are people whose abilities to make change—that they believe in—is developing, coming into existence,** ***and*** **coming forth into view or notice.**

Leaders can and do 'emerge' at any time. I'm not suggesting they don't. ELs' talents *typically* emerge *and* begin to be recognized in the form of much greater responsibility between the ages of thirty and forty-five. During this period, the EL's career exploration and experimentation phase, which was so characteristic of their twenties, is replaced with a clearer sense of personal strengths and what's important to them professionally. This clarity is also compounded with a greater sense of personal responsibility, which often arrives in the form of mortgage payments, children, and other important personal interests that develop when ELs begin families. If it's not families, there are an untold number of personal

passions ELs make a point of exploring. The interests run the gamut from hiking to cycling, from band practice to online gaming, from volunteering with a local charity to taking extensive trips abroad. Involvement can range from casual interest to full out commitment. Some of it requires specialized (and not inexpensive) equipment; all of it requires time.

They are thirsty for the challenges and opportunities that will help them grow, yet they have strong demands outside of work as well. They may even reach senior *roles* during this period, albeit with far less experience than *established* senior leaders.

In a way, Emerging Leaders are the perfect opportunity and paradox for organizations:  They're reaching a point in their lives where they have a greater sense of professional direction and personal responsibility, but at the same time, they're still a relatively clean slate in terms of their leadership behaviours. Their professional habits are still malleable. This adds up to engagement, focus, growing skill, and a willingness to learn from past results without being limited by them. It's a unique, formative, and incredibly influential developmental period for most leaders, and a tremendous opportunity for employers to shape and leverage their most valuable assets.

They are your company's next generation of leaders. The market forces I'm about to outline demonstrate that these Emerging Leaders are needed more now than ever before.

For over a decade my company has specialized in building the future leaders of organizations. I've worked with thousands of Emerging Leaders and have an intimate understanding of what makes them tick. In this book, I will share with you the guidance I offer the *established* Senior Leaders—or SLs, as I usually refer to them throughout this

book—to identify, train, leverage, and retain the next generation of leaders in their

organizations: the Emerging Leaders in their midst.

# Section I - Inside the Heads of ELs

# Chapter 1

## Climbing Mt. Everest

It's 4:55 p.m. on Friday evening. There's a huge project you wanted to get out the door *tonight,* and you suddenly realize that the two people in charge of it are heading out the door.

One is wearing tennis sneakers and is headed for the gym.

The other is headed for his son's T-ball game.

The next generation of leaders—the Emerging Leaders upon whom you rely to keep your company competitive and successful—can be a mystery at best, and at worst, a disappointment or a huge HR problem. Or maybe they're all three of those things at once. These employees seem unpredictable, are harder to manage, and their priorities are difficult to gauge. Half the time, they don't even seem as *serious* about work as you've grown to expect.

Oh, they want to make money, rise rapidly through the ranks, and get the most exciting projects to work on. But there's something hard to understand about the next generation of leaders. Practically every senior manager realizes at one time or another, especially when an important deadline rolls around and the younger leaders are clocking out as five p.m. approaches, 'They're not like me.'

They *aren't* like you. Those employees coming up behind you work differently, live differently, think differently, expect differently, and in every important way, march to the beat of a different drummer.

This can drive bosses crazy. It's a source of endless frustration and concern to senior managers, and the issue isn't just theoretical. Senior Leaders must identify the next generation of leaders, and motivate and incent them properly so that they will want to stay and, in time, become Senior Leaders themselves. There's the rub: how do you identify which of your employees are worthy of the investment of time, money and energy it will take to lead on a bigger level?

How do you trust people you don't quite understand?

Every Senior Leader was once a fresh-faced and eager-eyed Emerging Leader. And although it may seem difficult when you're facing a full plate of responsibilities and priorities, fully leveraging your Emerging Leaders will require you to pause—and get into their world. To put it simply, your next generation of leaders is a different breed. They can be just as hard-working as you, and you've seen them step up to the plate when it's really necessary. But at the same time, they have other priorities, other draws on their time and energy, which hold just as much, or perhaps even more, sway as their professional ambitions. They often don't think the same way you do about work, money, life, marriage, parenting, or anything that you hold dear. More often than not, they aren't willing to put in long hours at the office, to sacrifice nights and weekends for the cause, to wait their turn, to remain silent in meetings, to defer to office politics—in short, to do many of the things that you had to do to reach the top. How do you understand these employees' priorities—and get them to understand yours?

**The Path to the Peak**

Ever thought about climbing Mt. Everest? In some ways, it might be easier to reach the top of the world's highest peak than to understand, identify, motivate, train, and retain your most promising future leaders. At least with Mt. Everest, you can hire guides, buy oxygen tanks, train properly, and follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before you. When it comes to working with your Emerging Leaders, typically those people in their thirties and early forties who are moving up in your organization, there are no guides—at least, not until now. The purpose of this book is to share with you insights about how your Emerging Leaders—your ELs, as we will refer to them in this book—think. We will examine how they think about themselves, about you, about work, about life, and what you need to do in order to generate the most value together.

If you're climbing Mt. Everest, as you rise up from Advance Base Camp, you will come to a series of deep breaks in the path to the top called crevasses. The crevasses are deep, and falling into one is almost inevitably fatal. The only way to traverse the crevasses and keep on the path to the top is by crawling across ladders, which are fastened to the ground by experienced Sherpas—and by not looking down! Think of me as your Sherpa to help you cross the crevasse that separates your understanding of the world from that of your ELs. There's a yawning gap between the way you think and the way your ELs think. This book is intended as a ladder to bridge that gap. It offers a successful approach to the peak; however, no two climbers make their way to the top in exactly the same footsteps. There are infinite ways to make this journey your own.

Climbing Mt. Everest and succeeding in business have a lot in common. You've got to be careful where you step, and you've got to be careful about whom you choose to put on

your team. If the people coming up behind you aren't capable and experienced, you can pay an extremely heavy price. You're literally harnessed together as you make the ascent, so you have to have as much confidence in those behind you as they have in you.

I've worked almost exclusively with Emerging Leaders in mid- to large-size companies, and I've helped their Senior Leaders, SLs like you, maximize the value of their Emerging Leaders, those who are coming up the mountain behind them. I want to share with you in this book the insights that I have learned from working with the *established* Senior Leaders—typically individuals in their mid to late forties, fifties, and sixties—and the next generation of leaders.. It's my intention that this book will make you hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars, in terms of talent leveraged, productivity gained, and misunderstandings avoided.

### The Looming Leadership Void Ahead

The Senior Leader may not be entirely happy with the attitude or perceived work ethic that their Emerging Leaders have. But they have an even bigger problem to face: demographics. In the business world, there is an unavoidable and growing leadership void that stems from two root issues:

1. The mass of baby boomers who are reaching retirement age and will soon leave the workforce, and

2. The lack of skilled workers entering the workforce.

Here's a brief—and troubling—picture of what the changing landscape looks like.

There simply aren't enough people entering the workforce as Baby Boomers retire. The US Bureau of the Census projects that in the US, 'Almost 90 percent of the next decade's [2000-2010] net increase in the working-age population will occur in the fifty-five to sixty-four year age category.'[1] The Conference Board of Canada, which extensively studies the nation's labour trends, states that '[the] steep decline in labour force growth is at the root of the labour supply crisis that will develop in Canada around 2010.'[2] Indeed, the study forecasts a shortage of one million workers in Canada by 2020, stating, '[The] dimensions of the problem are enormous, and the growing difficulty in hiring or retaining existing employees will dramatically alter the structure of the Canadian labour markets.'

A survey by global management company Accenture of more than 850 top executives from the US, UK, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Japan, and China found that two-thirds of executives put the inability to attract and retain talent second only to competition as their key threat to business success. Similarly, a survey of 1,350 European executives from twenty-seven countries conducted by The Boston Consulting Group and the European Association of Personnel Management (EAPM) concluded that managing talent is the most critical challenge facing businesses today. In fact, 72 percent of executives believe that human capital has an impact on innovation and new product development; 82 percent believe that human capital has an impact on profitability; and 92 percent believe that it has a significant effect on customer satisfaction.

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[1] William B. P. Robson, *Aging Populations and the Workforce: Challenges for Employers* (Winnipeg: British-North American Committee, 2001), 7.
[2] Conference Board of Canada, "Charting a Canadian Course in North America," in *Performance and Potential 2001-2002* (Ottawa, 2001), 55.

A US Conference Board study done in 2004 determined that 65 percent of the companies surveyed reported that talent management had become 'dramatically or considerably more important' since 2001.[3]

A survey by SEI's Center for Corporate Futures (Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania) in 2007 uncovered a concern that 'difficulties in finding, retaining, and growing talent' was the number one priority for international business respondents. What's also interesting is that their choice was picked from a list of challenges that included the growing influence of India and China on business.[4]

A 2007 research report, *Leadership 2021,* found that 81 percent of US companies are concerned that their supply of leadership talent will affect their future business plans.[5]

But not only is the labour market declining from the top down, it's also creating a gap that will need to be filled. According to a year-long study conducted by McKinsey & Co., over the next fifteen years there will be 15 percent fewer Americans in the thirty-five to forty-five year age range than there are today. Assuming that the US economy averages 3 to 4 percent growth each year, the demand for thirty-five to forty-five-year-olds will jump by 25 percent, even as the supply will be plunging by 15 percent.[6]

The reality is, the senior generation of leadership, the Baby Boomers, have begun to hit retirement age. When they retire, they will create a yawning gap in management—at the top, where the losses will be most keenly felt. It's a business cliché that your most valuable

[3] Lynn Morton, *Integrated and Integrative Talent Management: A Strategic HR Framework*, Research Report 1345-04-RR (New York: The Conference Board, 2004)

[4] Matthew Guthridge, Asmus B. Komm, and Emily Lawson, "The People Problem in Talent Management," *McKinsey Quarterly*, no.2, 2006.

[5] Leadership 2021, Research Report, Corporate University Xchange, Harrisburg, PA, 2007, p.4

[6] Charles Fishman, "The War for Talent," *Fast Company* no. 16 (1998), http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/16/mckinsey.html.

assets take the elevator to street level every night, but it's a reality. Businesses have mostly

paid lip service to this inevitable reality. In 2004, an International Public Management

Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) survey of employers discovered that 63

percent of respondents did no workforce planning of any kind. A 2003 study by the Society

for Human Resource Management (SHRM) of their entire membership base found that 60

percent of the members had no succession planning in place in any form.

Many Senior Leaders are just beginning to see and act on the threat that this

demographic shift implies. As your senior leaders leave, the transfer of power, responsibility,

and leadership begins. Are you ready?

**Got Depth?**

Progressive organizations measure their leadership capacity not by the leaders they

have today but by how many people in their organization could step up and fill leadership

positions *tomorrow*. In other words, they measure their 'bench strength,' just like any

basketball team. Why is this so important? Companies have profit and growth opportunities

that they can only bring home if they have the personnel on board.

Does your business have the bench strength? Are you hiring, retaining, and training

Emerging Leaders sufficiently to meet opportunities today and possibilities tomorrow? If

you're not, you're not alone. But imagine the consequences of retaining incapable people in

major roles for extended periods of time. The losses inherent in your company's resultant

failure to respond to market opportunities could be incalculable. When the crunch hits,

everyone, from senior management to the customers, feels the pain. And world markets are

less forgiving than ever before. With the substantial variety of significant variables at play today, your ability to build strength for the future is not a luxury; it is a requirement for survival.

I use the term 'bench strength' because the players on the court right now are your Senior Leaders. The people on the bench are your ELs. You might have five Michael Jordans, but unless they can play at full intensity for forty-eight minutes, a team with lesser superstars and a strong bench is likely to beat the five Jordans every time. The guys with the bench will always win, because they can simply exhaust the competition. So the questions Senior Leaders have to confront are these:

1.      How many people do we have who could replace our current key leaders?

2.      What's the quality of the replacements, and how capable are they?

If you've got only one Emerging Leader per department, you don't have enough bench strength. What if that replacement leaves? What if that person gets recruited by your San Francisco office? Now what do you do? Here's the reality: the EL, especially an EL confident of his or her value to an organization, is far more likely to jump ship than were employees in the generation of today's Senior Leaders. SLs often operate from a mentality that you pretty much work for one company for your whole career, or if you change jobs, it's a big deal, and you might only do it two, maybe three, times in your lifetime. ELs are a little more like Goldilocks—if one situation doesn't feel right, they'll move to another, and then another, and then another. A résumé with a lot of job changes was a badge of dishonour even a few decades ago. It meant that you were unstable, that you couldn't commit. ELs have no such compunction about keeping their résumés neat and tidy. And a résumé littered

with a half-dozen jobs in a decade is no sign of instability, in their minds. In this day and age, having multiple jobs on a résumé is less a sign of instability and more a representation of one's mobility, flexibility, and a desire to find the best possible situation. If you look at an EL's résumé and don't like his or her prior mobility, then you are not right for him/her. This is a 180-degree difference from prior generations, who had the mentality that they needed to craft themselves, their experiences, and their résumés to please the potential boss.

So maintaining an anemic bench is a serious gamble. Lack of bench strength limits your ability to take on your initiatives, and provides far less flexibility to respond to market pressures or opportunities. There are simply not enough people to draw upon who have already developed leadership qualities. It all adds up to less bench strength and, therefore, less flexibility in organizations.

Just as sports teams sometimes throw unseasoned rookies into a game, corporate enterprises are finding it increasingly necessary to throw untested individuals who haven't yet grown into their full maturity as business leaders, into extremely demanding situations. This forced compromise arises from not only the demographic reality but also from the fact that, while organizations are getting flatter, *jobs* are actually getting bigger. At Pepsi, in the 1980s, the average age of an executive was forty-two. Now it is thirty-one. Can you imagine a wet-behind-the-ears thirty-one-year-old doing the job of someone who previously had eleven more years of leadership experience?

Younger people are getting bigger jobs sooner, and this has a significant impact on organizations. All of this makes it more imperative than ever to identify and develop the individuals within your organization who have the greatest potential to stay, to lead, and to

make meaningful contributions. When we develop Emerging Leaders effectively, and in the right numbers, we've got the bench strength to handle problems and opportunities now. We can handle defections, both internal and to our competitors.

### Time to Hit the Ground Running

Today's ELs are different from SLs. The looming reality is that the future of your organization and what you've built will rest upon them. If today's ELs are understood, embraced, invested in, leveraged, and retained, your business is going to thrive. Those savvy companies that see this will be poised for long-term growth and sustainability. The laggards, the ones who are trying to develop their future leaders over a period of twenty years, as they did in the old days, are going to be dinosaurs. You can't afford to wait that long. The meteor is coming, disguised as demographics. And we all know what happened to the dinosaurs.

So here you are, an SL, trapped by the rising expectations of the marketplace, tight limitations on what you can spend on head count, and a new generation of ELs who are less focused on your best interests than they are on their own futures. How do you get the most out of these individuals? How do you stay competitive with a workforce seemingly so unstable and hard to read? How do you cross that crevasse that separates your mentality from theirs?

Luckily enough, doing all of this is not as difficult or strenuous as it may seem. It requires engaging your Emerging Leaders in new ways and training them well enough to take their own initiative rather than shackling them with antiquated approaches and dragging

them along. You'll reap the benefits multifold, and you'll be surprised to find that the process is better than painless—it's rewarding.

So let's get started.

**Chapter 2**

**Your ELs' Frustrating Little Habits**

A generation ago, it was simple to manage people: 'This is the task, this is what you do, so go and do it.'

That's so last century.

ELs can drive SLs crazy. ELs usually want the plush projects, the dreamy jobs that SLs like you worked forever to get. SLs tell me all the time, 'Never in my career did I get these kinds of opportunities at that young an age, or that early in my career, as these people are expecting.' In other words, your ELs want the exciting, fun projects, but the grunt work still needs to be done, and it often appears that they just can't be bothered with it.

It's frustrating, because with their drive and enthusiasm, ELs are great at tackling these cool, fun projects. But when it comes to final implementation and getting things complete—the boring stuff that has to be done to generate value—either they don't want to do it or they're already onto the next project. SLs sense in ELs a tendency toward entitlement, a belief that they should only do high-level work and never have to focus on aspects of a job they find boring. In fact, SLs frequently report that their ELs' attitudes border on arrogance.

At the same time, it's taking longer to find good people to fill positions. In the past, an SL could put out a job listing or run it through Human Resources and get an avalanche of résumés from which to pick and choose. Today, tons of résumés are still coming in, but most SLs today realize that there are fewer really good people to hire. Finding the fit is

taking longer and longer. One SL told me that it takes eighteen months to two years to fill an important position. That's an eternity when you're trying to run a business. It also means that you've got fewer people trying to do more and more work, and the work that has to be done somehow feels beneath the dignity of the ELs you're expecting to do it. This is most definitely not to say that many ELs aren't willing to pitch in—over the short term, they often do. But eventually, their different set of priorities dictates that they should be out the door at five o'clock for that T-ball game. Nerves get frayed. Deadlines get pushed back. More stuff falls between the cracks. The quality of the work changes.

SLs frequently tell me, 'When I look at the best people on my team, one of the things that they want is more opportunities to grow by doing interesting projects.' You can understand that impetus; you've always wanted to have opportunities for growth as well. That's why you've gotten where you are. But you were able to wait for these opportunities, or seek them out diplomatically. Somehow, many ELs come off as bucking at the gate for projects that they may not be ready for, and they start making requests under circumstances in which you, in their shoes, would almost certainly choose to bide your time.

Many Senior Leaders find it bothersome that ELs are so straightforward in terms of asking for what they want, both in terms of time flexibility and also in terms of asking for the projects that interest them the most. SLs find it especially irksome that ELs just seem to want it all … yesterday, before they're entitled to it. The SL says, 'I had to work my butt off to get to where I am now, and some young whippersnapper wants to do the same kind of projects it took me fifteen or twenty years to get to. Who do they think they are? They don't

have the business sense and they don't have the business maturity! It just doesn't work that way!'

This appearance of EL entitlement is exacerbated by the current business climate. The challenge right now is that organizations are under increasing pressure to eliminate inefficiencies. They're cutting out layers of decision-making—middle management—that can get in the way or slow processes down. The result of this streamlining is flatter and flatter business structures: there is less opportunity for promotion than in the past, because there are fewer positions in the hierarchy. So ELs are either competing for positions that don't exist, or they're getting promoted much further in one step, because all the middle ground has vanished.

Everybody always talks about what a great thing it is to get rid of middle management. However, getting rid of middle management limits upward mobility, which may result in not being able to provide much incentive for ELs. The question really becomes, how do I provide my ELs with opportunities to grow and learn when an organization is flat?

### ELs Speak a Different Language

SLs tell me, 'Promoting people is the least of my problems! I don't even know how to begin *communicating* with them!'

That's true—many SLs don't know how to communicate effectively with their ELs. It's not like the old days, where the command-and-control model that many senior leaders were 'raised' in professionally was more commonly accepted as way to get things done.

Leading this next group of leaders, this new generation rising up, is different. Part of crossing that crevasse is finding the most effective ways to communicate with ELs. Senior Leaders traditionally were more political in terms of how they communicated with their bosses. They got to where they are by being prudent in terms of what they said to whom. ELs are more straightforward about what's going on, which means that SLs are often much more politically savvy than those reporting to them.

What comes as a surprise to many Senior Leaders is that the Emerging Leaders often don't even *care* about walking that fine, political line. Who is most politically sensitive in today's business climate? The SLs. If a Senior Leader wanted to work on a particular project, he would pull the right strings, go through the right channels, and follow the appropriate process for making that happen. ELs have less time, interest, or patience for the political process that has traditionally existed in enterprises. If an EL wants a project, they'll be far more assertive in asking for it directly. They'll often just say what they thinks. ELs tend to be less consensus-driven than their leaders. The ELs may not always be thinking outside the box, but they are almost always thinking outside the organization chart.

There is a certain level of maturity in the business world that can only be obtained over time. One way this lack of maturity in ELs can show up is when an EL is invited to a senior meeting. Perhaps the Emerging Leader has been invited to talk about a project she's working on. In years gone by, the Emerging Leader would only speak about the particular topic she was invited to discuss and would remain silent for the rest of the meeting. Yet sometimes Emerging Leaders will arrive and start participating in the rest of the meeting as if they were at the same level as the other participants. This inevitably bewilders some Senior

Leaders, who wonder how ELs have the effrontery to speak up. The Senior Leader would never have done that when *she* was coming up! So how can this younger generation??

The ELs' tendency to speak up and speak out comes from a number of factors. First, ELs tend to be much more result-oriented in their work. Process or rules of procedure are much less important than the results they accomplish. Therefore, ELs often get frustrated with consensus-focused meetings, which are held to allow team members to discuss projects in detail. They want to cut to the chase—and they may very well speak up in the middle of a conversation if they feel it has gotten circuitous or beside the point.

Another reason why ELs may appear to SLs to be speaking out of turn is that high-performing ELs seem to want attention to a much greater degree than SLs did earlier in their careers. They're driven by a need to remain marketable, and they know the best way to do this is to first produce results and then talk about them.

Let's say there are ten people on an operating committee and three out of four of them are potential Emerging Leaders. Then there's the Senior Leader responsible for this operating committee. The SL thinks he's going to run the meeting on his terms. Instead, the three ELs seek some time to discuss their projects, accomplishments, and needs. Of course, it doesn't *always* work this way because some ELs are more reserved. But many Emerging Leaders create a perception among the Senior Leaders that they need attention and that they're even immature, in the sense that they're constantly vying to look good. In the past, the politically savvy approach to 'getting ahead' often looked like quietly participating in meetings so as not to risk embarrassment by saying something stupid.

It's not that that culture has gone away, because office politics will exist as long as there are offices. In the cultures of some enterprises, office politics remain particularly rampant. This is especially true where particular managers are stuck in the old command-and-control way of doing business. However, Emerging Leaders are less and less willing to allow politics to determine their behaviour. And so, while politics still exist and need to be managed, they have much less patience for it.

At the same time, I've encountered many Emerging Leaders who do just the opposite: they tow the line so much that they hesitate to contribute. Confounding as it may seem, you may find that some of your ELs simply remain unbelievably quiet, rather than storming the meeting, beating on their chests like apes, and trying to take control of the environment.

What many SLs don't realize is that both of these challenging tendencies—either to speak too much or to speak up too little—come from the same tendency of this age group. ELs are operating from a standpoint that we'll discuss in great detail over the course of this book. I call it Me, Inc. They see themselves as working for their own tiny company, comprised of one employee: themselves. Me, Inc. is like a small business that enters into a working relationship with your business. The goals of your business are important, but your EL will always be answerable to Me, Inc. first and foremost. We'll talk about this more in Chapter 4, but for the time being, the important thing to realize is that your Emerging Leader is going to behave in ways that he or she believes will produce and prove more value for Me, Inc. This might mean overzealousness or it might mean reticence. Either approach often appears unsavvy from the SL perspective.

Two questions arise: how much do they have to conform to your way of thinking and how much do you have to conform to theirs? The important thing is that a spirit of partnership should prevail. The SL no longer holds all of the power, giving them the right to dictate everything to the ELs. Conversely, the ELs need to see the value that the SL brings to the table in terms of experience, wisdom, and institutional history. There's going to be give and take. For reasons we'll discuss, ELs simply will not work on the same basis that you did at an earlier point in your career. It's just not going to happen. But even accepting the fact that they won't do everything the way it's been done in the past, how do you find the time to train them to understand what your way represents?

**ELs Need Time That You Don't Have**

Given the demands most SLs face, the number of fires they have to put out, the number of crises they have to work through, and the flattening of organizations that can have them doing more detailed work at levels lower than them—anything that is not immediately revenue-generating tends to fall by the wayside. Chief among these 'important but not urgent' tasks is the business of developing the future leaders of your organization. All too often, this focus goes by the boards when customers are screaming one thing or suppliers are screaming another. Engaging and then developing the right people is often a task that drops off the to-do list entirely.

As we've introduced earlier, given the current demographic reality, it's not a task that organizations can avoid anymore. Organizations that fail to engage, train, and develop Emerging Leaders do so at their peril. But an even worse scenario is when Emerging Leaders

rise up into new positions of authority … but don't have the training and skills they need to succeed. Or when they see themselves stagnating with your organization, not being given opportunities to learn, and you lose them entirely to companies that *are* offering training and opportunities to grow. If we aren't setting people up to do great things, we are inevitably committing them to fail—or cut bait. So one of the key topics we'll discuss is how to grow your Emerging Leaders faster while *simultaneously* delivering value and addressing the fast and furious needs of your business (a serious downfall of many leadership development programs in my opinion).

### ELs Seem Underprepared for Delegation

This leads directly into the question of delegating—or, to put it more bluntly, *releasing*—tasks. Hesitancy to delegate is natural. An SL has to feel confident that an EL can actually take on a project or initiative and make it succeed. How do you release your responsibilities to a younger or less-seasoned employee with confidence that he will be able to take the project on and make it work? We'll talk about the best ways to prepare Emerging Leaders, in order to ensure that those projects and initiatives will happen on time, the way they're supposed to happen. The other part of this equation is SLs having the courage to give ELs the opportunity to succeed … or to fail and learn from failure.

Contrast the way a company like Google handles delegation. At Google, up to 20 percent of an individual's time can be spent on his or her own projects. This gives Google employees the initiative to create some cool idea and then go and play with that idea. Google people can form teams, devote a lot of time, energy, and resources to a project, and totally

screw it up … but *it doesn't matter*. It could be a runaway success, which would be terrific, but even if it fails, there's virtually no downside. There's little risk to the company, because the project was never a revenue source for the company in the first place. Google simply gives its employees the opportunity to be kids in the candy store, trying whatever they want, with no consequences should they fail. Of course, not all organizations have the luxury of Google's particular breed of flexibility and cash reserves, but their approach speaks to their mindset about innovation—and creating an environment that fosters it.

The ability to try, fail, and not suffer for one's failure is sadly lacking in most organizations. In most workplaces, *everything* is big and significant. If you fail, then you're tarnished. How does an EL get that next opportunity once he's failed? How can he get a raise? At talent-review time, when it boils down to deciding who's on the 'top-talent list,' ironically enough, those who displayed initiative to take appropriate risks and failed —the very people on whom you should be betting the future of the company—can be the ones less likely to make the cut.

Concern about 'career-limiting moves' and internally tarnishing one's reputation can be one of the biggest factors that paralyze new ideas and stagnate leadership growth for ELs and SLs alike. Senior Leaders can have great influence on encouraging appropriate risk-taking in ELs—if they themselves can embrace this attitude as well.

### ELs Want to Do It All on Their Own

In today's business world, you can't manage the way you were managed.

As we alluded to earlier, many Senior Leaders were raised in the command-and-control model that preceded them. In fact, the organizational culture of North America was founded on the hierarchical approach of command-and-control management. In this model, the focus was on compliance with authority, with few questions asked. Many SLs were 'raised' in this world professionally, and although they often prefer a collaborative approach, it's natural to manage the way you were managed. Of course, like any behaviour, there are degrees to which it is expressed. But ELs simply don't speak the command-and-control language, and for those SLs who prefer this style, you'll likely have found that this approach falls on deaf ears.

SLs often find it absolutely maddening that ELs tend to work so independently. They don't want to be told what to do. They don't want to have someone looking over their shoulder. They don't want to have a bunch of 'check-ins,' where they are responsible for demonstrating whatever progress they have made. Instead, what they want to hear from you, the Senior Leader, is this: 'Here's a project, and here's what we want to accomplish. Make it happen.' And that's it.

In the past, a dominant theme in the lives of current SLs was micromanagement. The bosses of the SLs managed them very closely. It might have looked like, 'Here's a project, and here are the thirty-eight steps we're going to follow in order to complete the project. Go do these thirty-eight steps.' That's the command-and-control model. In the beginning of your career, when you were tasked with part of a project, you might never even have been told about the whole scope of the project. You were likely given your own small piece of the

puzzle, and you were expected to take care of it in keeping with the more traditional, controlled management approach that dominated business for so long.

ELs, on the other hand, want to know the big picture. They want to see the project in its entirety, partly because they need to know that they're contributing to something greater than themselves, but mostly because they don't like being micromanaged. As for the thirty-eight steps to completing the project, they're not interested. Their attitude is not, 'Give me step one and step two this week, and next week you can give me steps three and four.' They want to figure out the thirty-eight steps by themselves. This need for independence conflicts with the desires of many SLs to control the project (the way they were), to know what's going on, to be kept very informed, and to be able to make changes. The EL wants more autonomy, but many SLs prefer greater control. The truth: ELs *do* want to collaborate, but in their book, this does not involve being told what to do.

Furthermore, unlike a number of SLs, ELs respect skills and competence more than seniority. To them, there is nothing worse than working for an incompetent manager. So the fact that you're an SL will not automatically garner you your ELs respect. This can be a frustrating reality for many SLs, who aren't particularly eager to have to prove themselves to their younger employees, when proving themselves is exactly what they've spent their entire careers doing with those above them. The result: tension, which could be avoided. There are ways to resolve this seemingly impossible split. And we'll talk about how to do that further on in the book.

**ELs Just Aren't Like You**

Senior Leaders are often looking for people like themselves to hire, mentor, and promote—but when it comes to ELs, SLs find there is something unfamiliar about them. It's human nature that we're most comfortable when we're surrounded by people that are like us. A generation or two ago, the world, and certainly the business world, was much more homogenous. White men hired other white men, especially those who came from the same schools, backgrounds, and even families. Values were the same from one generation to the next. It was easy to find people just like yourself.

And then the world changed, and with it, the workplace became more democratized. The world went from Lawrence Welk to World music without missing a beat. But this new heterogeny in the workplace leaves the traditional manager at something of a loss. How do you find people 'just like you' when the category of 'just like you' has all but gone away? The senior leaders often need to recognize that looking for people just like themselves isn't necessarily a good solution, for several reasons. First, there aren't that many of you left! And second, we need people who have fresh eyes that can look at today's complex problems and offer new perspectives. But that's not enough. We need those contrary perceptions to be shared and heard. The days of being surrounded by 'yes' people, where decisions and thinking were rarely challenged, won't help Senior Leaders to keep up with the pace of today's change. Abraham Lincoln was admired for surrounding himself with people who challenged his thinking. This strength is also one being attributed to US President Barack Obama for making choices such as Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State.

Emerging Leaders, by virtue of the smaller number of years they've been on the job, lack the information and history the Senior Leaders have. But my viewpoint is that this is

actually positive. The Emerging Leader brings fresh eyes and a new perspective to situations that SLs aren't always capable of bringing. Granted, ELs may have less maturity when it comes to how to handle certain situations or how to approach certain things, including conflict in the boardroom or any other form of dispute resolution. But the value of the fresh perspective that an EL brings should not be discounted just because he or she doesn't 'look or act like me' or lacks the Senior Leader's experience.

Often, it is difficult to acknowledge or recognize an EL's fresh perspective because of the differences in communication styles between ELs and SLs that we discussed earlier. A Senior Leader may have been in the organization for twenty-plus years, or may have held the senior vice president position for some time—but that experience can actually blind her to fresh thinking and new ideas. So when an Emerging Leader brings out a new idea, she may be so startled by the EL's outspoken style that she doesn't even hear the idea for what it is. The SL's first thought may not be, 'Will it work?' but 'Who the hell are you?'

To compound matters, if the idea is a good one, then suddenly the Senior Leader looks bad to himself and maybe to everyone else in the meeting. You've been here *this long* and you haven't thought about *this* yet? It certainly isn't from lack of intelligence or competence. But again, fresh eyes and approaches can stir things up. Sometimes it's tough for the Senior Leader to get his ego out of the way and allow the Emerging Leader's ideas to receive due consideration, especially if they have been communicated in the assertive way described above. It can be threatening when someone else comes up with new ideas that the Senior Leader hasn't considered before. It's likely that a considerable portion of your ELs work under SLs like the one I've just described.

The truth is that if we don't understand others, it's easy to find fault in their behaviour—both for SLs and ELs alike. We're all well aware of this tendency; it's human nature. But actually getting a reign on it and keeping it from obstructing our paths to success is a more difficult and complex task than you might expect. Despite appearances, impasses between Senior Leaders and Emerging Leaders are rarely caused by bad attitudes on either side. Instead, individuals get tripped up on their misunderstanding of the other's motivations. So let me show you the inner workings of your ELs and dispel the misunderstandings that may get in the way of clear communication and a highly rewarding relationship with them. Who exactly are your Emerging Leaders? What's on their minds? What are they striving for, and why? Let's meet your typical ELs and identify their motivations and priorities, which SLs might not be aware of.