



## INSIDE

### PAGE 2

< What is the Role of a Professor?

< Ethical Leadership: The Silver Lining in a Tumultuous Year

### PAGE 3

< Millennials vs. Baby Boomers

## Ethical Differences Among Generations

By *Ashley Salaiz, Ph.D.*

*Assistant Professor of Management;  
Associate Director, Center for Ethics*

The term “generation” refers to a group of people born and living during the same period of time, which usually spans 15 years. Currently there are four different generations in today’s workforce, and it can be difficult to understand the needs, wants and values of each generation. Over the past several months, generational identity has become a trending topic and has raised the question: what do we really know about our own generation, and what are our beliefs about the other generations? In this issue, we dive into this topic to uncover the ethical issues relevant to the various generations.



*Ashley Salaiz*

## Generational Ethics

By *Edgel “Ed” Lester, Chair, The Center for Ethics;  
Shareholder, Carlton Fields, P.A.*

Conventional wisdom holds that members of different generations have different values and ethics. We hear that “traditionalists,” who grew up in the World War era, are known for great interpersonal loyalty and an almost military acknowledgment of authority. Their children, the “baby boomers,” despite their self-description as “revolutionary,” were also willing to participate thoroughly, and profitably, in the corporate world. “Gen X’ers,” born in the late 1960s and the 1970s, are known for their independence and their suspicion about organizational values. And “Gen Y’ers” or “millennials,” born in the 1980s and 1990s, are noted for their confidence and their mastery of electronic tools used in the marketplace. One of the challenges we have as professionals charged with supporting ethical business decisions is deciding how people of different ages respond to ethical challenges. If they respond differently, then we, as managers, will want to understand the differences.



*Edgel “Ed” Lester*

It is actually quite reasonable to expect that people growing up in the different generations would have significantly different values. After all, the economic events in their formative years are very different. Most notably, the development of computers has gradually allowed the younger generations to function independently of their peers and, sometimes with limited supervision, to profit from aggressive business tactics. This is compounded by the fact that businesses are often so focused on the bottom line that they fail to address behaviors that, in the short term are profitable but that, in the longer term, might put them at substantial risk. We see, time and time again, how the pressure to perform and the inducements for high performance result in temptations for aggressive young business people.

My personal views on this matter, as a “baby boomer,” are informed by almost 50 years in the workplace, mostly as a lawyer, where I observed and hired professionals in all of the generational groups. In my case, I was fortunate to be employed by a firm that has always placed a high value on both training and performance. Nevertheless, it is clear to me that, in general, businesses in the past 20 years have been less willing to suffer the cost of supervision and more likely to reward behaviors that are profitable in the short run. We have all learned valuable lessons from the business failures of recent years that were clearly attributable to a loss of corporate control over some of the most

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## Generational Ethics

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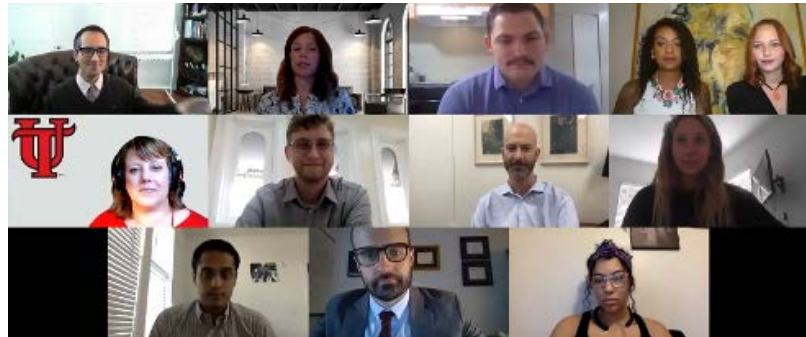
entrepreneurial young employees. We have found that cutting corners on ethical decisions is a recipe for disaster.

The question remains if the change in corporate culture has resulted in generational differences regarding ethical behavior. I believe, possibly contrary to the conventional wisdom, that in spite of the different influences affecting business people today and in spite of the different business challenges today, individuals of all generations are very similar in their responses to ethical challenges and in their willingness to forgo profits in order to treat others fairly. The marks of successful business people today, and 50 years ago, is hard work, empathy for clients and co-workers, respectful response to supervision and training and careful consideration of the costs as well as the benefits of ethical behavior. Our challenge today is to learn from past successes and failures, and to provide corporate guidance that focuses on the long term reputation of our companies as well as our short term profits. Among other things, we need to institute procedures that reward effective ethical training and behavior and that encourage all employees, of all ages, to help us identify and eliminate the processes that permit profit-taking at the expense of ethical behavior.

## What is the Role of a Professor?

### The Center for Ethics Explores in a Speaker Series Webinar

*By Jordan Hurwitz, Staff Assistant*



*Top row from left to right: Director of Center for Ethics Robert Marley, Associate Director of Center for Ethics Ashley Salaiz, Eric Bingham, Dior Rutherford and Sara Mazzola. Middle row from left to right: Deletha Hardin, Carter Hardy, Eric Freundt and Laine Kenny. Bottom row from left to right: Omar Lopez, Aaron Wood and Dominique Trottier*

The Center for Ethics Fall Speaker Series explored student and faculty perceptions regarding the role of a professor. Delivered in a real-time webinar broadcast on Oct. 28, four faculty and four students debated the role of the professor, along with over 150 Tampa Bay students, faculty and community members interactively participating via Zoom Q&A.

Topics of debate ranged from the impact of student evaluations on faculty teaching, the role of tenure, how supportive faculty should be of students and a plethora of questions from the audience. The event helped students and faculty learn more about each other, hopefully fostering a better cross-community understanding of each group's perspectives.

The debate was moderated by The Exponent, a company founded by Sara Mazzola ('18) and Dior Rutherford, whose goal is to facilitate intellectual discussion on emerging topics. The panel featured professors Carter Hardy (philosophy), Aaron Wood (economics), Deletha Hardin (psychology), Eric Freundt (biology) and UT students Omar Lopez, Dominique Trottier, Eric Bingham and Laine Kenny.

## Ethical Leadership: The Silver Lining in a Tumultuous Year

*By Robert Marley, Ph.D., Director of Center for Ethics; Associate Professor of Accounting, The University of Tampa*



*Top Row from left to right: Ashley Salaiz, Associate Director of Center for Ethics; Robert Marley, Director of Center for Ethics; Lorna Taylor, CEO of Premier Eye Care. Bottom row from left to right: Dean Frank Ghannadian, Eric Newman, President of J.C. Newman Cigar Company; James Ferman, President of Ferman Motor Car Company.*

Hardships bring forth silver linings that push us to move forward. The Center for Ethics hosted an online panel discussion featuring three Tampa Bay CEOs who reflected on their positive experiences during COVID-19. While the pandemic has brought forth a great deal of distress, the leadership of these

## Ethical Leadership: The Silver Lining in a Tumultuous Year

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three resilient CEOs demonstrate that positivity in the workplace can prevail. The panelists featured included Lorna Taylor, CEO of Premier Eye Care; Eric Newman, owner, and president of J.C. Newman Cigar Company; and James Ferman, president of Ferman Motor Car Company.

The webinar event drew 100 attendees and was moderated by Ashley Salaiz, associate director of the Center of Ethics. The panelists discussed the importance of staying positive and recognizing that difficult times do not last. The overarching theme of panelists' responses was that the pandemic helped them to refocus on their relationships with their employees. For example, panelist Eric Newman discussed his role of reassuring employees that they should stay home if feeling sick without worry about loss of pay or job. By providing support for employees, the workplace becomes a safer place for those working together. Panelist Lorna Taylor implemented morning meetings where employees simply shared their highs and lows, a tactic that built stronger relationships as employees learned more about each other. The discussion continued to delve into the importance of trust between employers and their employees, as each CEO stressed that trust must be established prior to hardship and makes for a smoother transition to a "new normal." All three panelists noted that their trust with their employees helped a great deal during these trying times.

The webinar concluded with helpful advice from panelists, who advised students to embrace change through continuous leadership and not to stress over trivial things. Pushing oneself out of their comfort zone and striving to be the best is an important key to success and overcoming obstacles. The insights of these three panelists demonstrated the importance of strong ethical leadership during this exceptional time.

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## Millennials vs. Baby Boomers

*By Jordan Hurwitz, Staff Assistant*

Each generation brings forth a wide variety of different values and priorities. I'm a millennial, and my generation has grown up to believe there is more to living than responsibilities. Work is an important part of life, but it is not your entire life. While this sentiment is shared by many millennials, many millennials are frustrated by the low entry level pay and the high cost of living. Not everything is easy – entry level pay has remained stagnant while college loans and rising housing costs leave little room to save for the experiences that make our lives meaningful. Older generations tend to counter this new way of thinking because tradition is highly valued. The question remains: are millennials spearheading change or just stubbornly resisting adulthood? Top concerns for millennials today include the (rapidly rising) cost of living and work-life balance. Millennials find it harder to accumulate wealth due to the high cost of education, low entry-level pay that has remained relatively flat for the past 50 years and high cost of living. These factors lead to the immense amount of debt millennials find themselves owing, and as a result, significantly fewer millennials are less likely to own homes, instead renting and living with roommates for longer compared to prior generations.

There is also an outcry by millennials to re-evaluate work-life balance. Entry level jobs in careers such as accounting often require employees to work up to 100 hours a week during busy season. Younger generations are resisting these norms because of the belief that one's life should not revolve around their work, but rather, be enjoyed with loved ones and personal hobbies. Younger generations tend to have the mind set of "work to live" rather than "live to work." While the extra work hours during busy season may seem necessary, if younger generations are working

to change this, it may be possible to adapt and instill shorter work hours while maintaining efficiency. There is an overall dissatisfaction with the amount of work that is necessary within traditional employment environments, but it still seems difficult (or even impossible) to afford the same standard of living that boomers experienced. Millennials believe that if enough people come together and unacceptable and simply leaders to quicker burn-out, the quality of life of millions of people can dramatically increase.

One may ask, is this ethical? Is this movement for changing the standard of working hours fair to those that had to endure the long busy seasons? On the side of younger generations, I believe it is ethical because while 100 hour work weeks may have been necessary in the past, with technological advances and fast access to knowledge, times continue to change and efficiency can be possible in less time. On the other side of this argument, is it fair that younger generations must endure the hardship of two economic crises and inflation of education cost? Millennials receive a significant amount of criticism for their new way of thinking and evaluating society. There is a misunderstanding between the Millennial generation and the Boomer generation, which creates a gap making it harder to come together to change. Both sides carry validity in their arguments, however as time goes on change is inevitable.



*Jordan Hurwitz*

## COVID-19 Haiku

*Everyone lock down  
Safety first, mentally drained  
I do for others*

## Millennial Perceptions on Boomers Haiku

*Living in the past  
Times do change, evolve and grow  
Work to understand*

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