

# The Compassionate Organization in the 21st Century

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## CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

*Experience is not what happens to you; it is what you do with what happens to you.*

—Aldous Huxley

As our society advances into the 21st century, questions are arising regarding the suitable organizational forms and processes to meet the challenges of this new era. Yet these concerns may be inappropriate, or at least premature, until the central issues driving change surface and their implications are explored. The list of possibilities is almost endless, especially as the boundaries of time and space are expanded to include the next 97 years and global opportunities and threats. Nonetheless, four that may dominate the earliest epoch among firms operating in the United States and many other Western democracies are: understanding and interacting with the new consumer, understanding and managing succeeding generations, self-management and the multiplicity of selves, and technology as friend and foe. Each is described in detail below.

### The New Consumer

Demographic shifts will bring a tidal wave of changes to traditional market definitions and

the resulting segmentation and targeting strategies. One important trend is that the “typical” consumer will be both older and younger. As members of the Baby-Boom Generation move from their current stage of midlife into the early stages of old age, they will become the largest generation in history to do so. During the first part of this century, they will replace Tom Brokaw’s “greatest generation ever” and elbow their way past the much smaller Lost Generation, born during the Great Depression or the Second World War. At the same time, their progeny—given the moniker Generation Y, since they follow the pragmatic and skeptical Generation X—will ascend the throne of the youthful consumer. Their numbers alone, 71 million, are unrivaled except for the original 78 million Boomers, assuring that Generation Y will continue to be an important focus of marketers’ attention. Extreme sports, cellular phones that allow for instant messaging, Internet access, video transmission, and the return of sports styling to low-end automobiles attest to their economic power.

A second trend on the horizon is the expansion of the “majority minority” and the diminution of the cultural icon. As executives who operate in California have already discovered, sub-populations of citizens and non-citizens of African, Hispanic, and Asian ancestry dominate the consumer landscape.

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When taken in combination, they account for the greater part of the state's population and represent the fastest growing market segments. What makes them unique is that, unlike their earlier European counterparts, they are less likely to integrate rapidly into the mainstream consumer culture. Instead, they tend to work and live in more contained communities where they can maintain their traditional languages, customs, and buyer behaviors. These communities are no longer confined to "immigrant gateway" cities, but are springing up in Southeastern and Western states not traditionally home to such diversity. Marketers who wish to serve these diverse groups are learning that they must meet them on their own terms rather than through the use of a single dominant cultural ideal. Models with more "exotic" features, the use of multiple languages in promotions and by service employees, and advertisements embedded in local communities and media are just the beginning.

A third trend is the growing disparity between the "haves" and the "have-nots" within and across nations. For example, differences in income between the top 20 percent and the bottom 20 percent of U.S. consumers reached a 75-year high before the close of the previous century. Globalization may be one of the culprits, as thousands of unionized manufacturing jobs moved overseas in search of lower costs. As a result, a whole layer of well-paying opportunities for less skilled and less educated workers disappeared and was replaced by low-level service jobs at minimum wage and without benefits. Additionally, the information age that ushered in great wealth and employment for the educated elite reduced the need for a host of clerical and support positions that previously represented entry into white-collar employment. Clerical workers of yesterday have been supplanted by administrative assistants with greater technical and managerial skills. Receptionists who now do little more than answer the phone and copy material for distribution occupy the lower rungs. This bifurcation is epitomized by the Japanese response to the automobile

market, with car models like Honda and Acura, Toyota and Lexus, and Nissan and Infiniti.

A fourth trend involves the impact of computer technology on the relationships between consumers and marketers. People of all ages are increasingly comfortable using Internet access to facilitate the exchange process, whether it involves paying bills, browsing bookstores, purchasing airline tickets, or shopping for a car. Virtual communities of consumers have blossomed that defy boundaries of geography and time. Groups have been established around favored brands (e.g., Macintosh users, Volkswagen drivers), life challenges (e.g., mothers of twins, people who have lost a beloved pet, survivors of trauma), or special interests (e.g., horticulturists, extreme sports devotees, day traders). As technology improves on-line access to goods and services, an increasing number of purchase decisions are negotiated without face-to-face interactions of any kind. Nonetheless, many consumers find the replacement of "high touch" with "high tech" unacceptable or unavailable. One possibility is that those at the higher end of the socioeconomic spectrum will be able to afford the luxury of personal service when desired, while those at the bottom end will lack access to the necessary technology for computer-aided transactions, eventually making automated exchange a "necessary evil" of the lower-class marketplace.

### **Generation Differences**

Each generational cohort that passes through history has its own defining experiences that shape its overall character. Baby-Boomers' psychological and emotional distance from their parents' generation was epitomized by the intergenerational conflict over the Vietnam War. Generation X members came of age during the AIDS crisis, and found themselves competing with the much larger Boomer cohort for economic resources, jobs, and promotions. Members of Generation Y will continue to mature and complete their entrance into the workforce during the early

part of the new millennium. They are defined, in part, by their relationships with their (predominantly) Boomer parents, who have created an environment for their children that is distinct from their own upbringing. Boomers' unprecedented educational achievements helped drive an ideological wedge between them and their less-educated parents; this "generation gap" has narrowed considerably as many members of Generation Y take for granted scholastic achievement and the opportunities that accompany it.

A mantra of Generation Y members is "Entertain me!" as they seek an expanding repertoire of experiences designed to satisfy a growing need for sensory stimulation. Spawned by Baby Boomers who achieved a measure of financial security before having children, many in this generation have been given greater opportunity to travel, to engage in curricular and extracurricular activities, and to enjoy more "quality time" with their parents than previous generations. Equally important, this is the first generation born and raised on the computer technology that has transformed major sources of stimulation from movies to television to music, enhancing their sensual quality and entertainment value. The rich and varied MTV style of sensory stimulation, together with the interactivity afforded by the Internet and video games, has shaped Generation Y's definition of entertainment, and (some speculate) may have changed the way they learn. As teachers at all levels can attest, current students become bored quickly by traditional lectures; they want to be heard as well as to listen, and thrive in a learning environment that demands their interaction and participation in a multiplicity of activities. As these young people enter the workforce, their ways of acquiring and sharing knowledge will likely revolutionize employee-training programs. For example, one enterprising employer attempting to train young recruits turned finally to a video game format, after he found traditional training manuals and lectures ineffective.

Another possible mantra for this generation is "Everything is excellent!" Their

Boomer parents, who faced enormous competitive pressures with sports, college admissions, and jobs, were determined to provide their progeny with a kinder and gentler world. Gone are the days of Little League programs where only the best athletes play, while others warm the bench or are cut from the team. Instead, Generation Y has been introduced to athletic events by way of "noncompetitive" sports that emphasize more equitable participation and self-esteem development over winning and competition. School systems have adopted similar methods that focus attention on personal improvement rather than between-student comparisons. While there are clear benefits to this path, the drawbacks are subtler and often go unnoticed. For instance, this approach may result in praise-for-anything kinds of feedback that fail to teach youth how to critically evaluate their own performances in a developmental way. Thus, many members of this generation have gone through life mistaking input (what they do) for output (how they perform), creating difficulties for themselves and their managers as they enter the workplace.

A complicating factor in any generational profile is the level of diversity among the focal cohort, and Generation Y is markedly more diverse—and more accepting of diversity—than preceding generations, in ethnicity, family composition, and sexual orientation. As noted previously, the growth of ethnic diversity in the U.S. and parts of Western Europe will have a profound impact upon the demographic landscape. The greatest effect of this shift is on the younger generations, since these sub-populations typically have higher fertility rates than the traditional majority. Overlaying the profile contained in this article with the cultural and sub-cultural dynamics of these ethnicities is a necessary task for fully understanding the managerial implications of leading Generation Y. Another complicating factor is the dominant socioeconomic status of these sub-populations, which varies from group to group and significantly influences their access to many defining entitlements.

## Multiplicity of Selves

As we mature and move through the stages of our individual lives, most of us continuously add personal and professional “selves” to a growing list of identities with implicit and explicit role responsibilities. Consider the example of a newborn child. S/he typically is a daughter/son to a mother and a father, a grandchild to two sets of grandparents, a niece/nephew to aunts and uncles, and, potentially, a sibling and a cousin to other young girls and boys. From infancy to adolescence to adulthood, new selves with identifiable requirements are added, including friend, lover, spouse, mother/father, and adult child of an aged parent. Our professional lives often follow a similar path. We may begin with part-time work that becomes increasingly time-consuming as we finish school and progress throughout our careers. With each advancing level of our vocations come new and broader responsibilities that often encompass what we did previously and the leadership of a growing number of people. Over time, our professional lives are progressively more complex and multifaceted, placing escalating demands on our limited resources.

While this rising number of personal and professional selves happens to all, few among us plan for their growth in a strategic way. For example, what is the likelihood that we fall in love, get offered a promotion, enter graduate school, or care for a sick parent at just the right time? Two additional issues further complicate the situation. First, while we usually are comfortable adding to our portfolio of selves, we are considerably less comfortable paring them down. How probable is it that once we become parents, we relinquish the job of daughter or son? How about seeking a new position that reduces our role responsibilities or leadership requirements? Second, the issue of connectivity among our expanding selves is rarely considered, especially the overlapping nature of the demands between our personal and professional roles. Difficulties such as divorce or the serious illness of a loved one

may profoundly impact the capacity to be fully present and function professionally. Conversely, overwhelming demands at work may diminish the ability to meet family needs. What is less obvious is that professional and family roles may also be experienced as mutually enriching.

People throughout modern times have faced the challenges and opportunities afforded by multiple selves, but certain tendencies of the generations that will dominate the early part of this century make it particularly vexing. For example, Baby Boomers are adept at holding onto previous selves as they add new ones, especially if they are associated with their (former) youthful vigor. On the one hand, they vowed to be different/better than their own parents, increasing the role and time demands of parenting. On the other hand, they have reached or soon will reach their highest career levels, acquiring all the benefits and burdens associated with rising to the top. The possibility of meeting both sets of role requirements to the perfectionist standards of Boomers is quite remote. As a result, they are more likely to suffer the anguish of role stress, decreasing their productivity as well as quality of life when they fail to live up to these self-imposed expectations. Aging is especially stressful for Boomers, in part because it inevitably brings with it increasing limitations in meeting role demands. How will this generation respond to death? Satirist Joe Queenan comments:

Baby Boomers are going to be shocked by death because there's nothing in their life that prepares them for it, because death is not a consumer experience. Death is just boom, you're done, out of here, finished. I think Baby Boomers, with their filofaxes and their mania for organization, are just going to say, "Can't die this afternoon because Caitlin has ballet lessons."

Not surprisingly, Baby Boomers have been poor role models to succeeding generations. Generation X has observed their

performances at work and how they hurry through their lives, rushing from event to event as they seek an elusive balance between their personal and professional selves. Generation Y has watched their harried existence from the home front, as they themselves are pushed from school to sports to music lessons with the intent of creating a "well-rounded" individual who is more likely to lead a successful adult life. An interesting outcome is that from one generation to the next, the idea of mixing personal and professional roles together throughout the day, rather than assigning them to discrete blocks of time, has become increasingly acceptable. This way of life may become standard, as more and more individuals "cyber-commute" to work from their homes on a regular basis, further blurring the lines between selves.

### **Technological Innovation**

The rapid growth of technology and its applications toward the end of the 20th century is nothing short of phenomenal. As we enter the new millennium, most young people take for granted the microwave ovens, personal computers, cable televisions, Internet access, and cellular telephones that were unavailable to their parents during childhood and adolescence. High-tech products and services permeate all aspects of our lives, and, as noted previously, they have radically changed our conceptions of time, place, and interpersonal relationships. For example, while the teenagers of yesterday spent hours on the phone talking to friends after school, the teens of today enter chat rooms or use AOL Instant Messenger to communicate with their peers at all hours and around the world. Their parents can now carry their "offices" with them wherever they go, using notebook and laptop computers that meet their every need for information and connectivity to their colleagues or workplaces.

Such technological innovations will continue to flourish and play an ever-expanding role in our society. As they do so, the lines of demarcation among them may become

increasingly blurred, as organizations blend technologies to better meet the needs of their consumers and workforces. The merging of media giants such as Time Warner with Internet providers such as AOL is only the tip of the iceberg. This century will spawn entrepreneurial ways of combining technologies that are integrated so seamlessly across organizational boundaries that users may fail to recognize distinctions among them. One potential outcome of this strategy is the fully computerized home or office of the future that is controlled by a central processing unit. Using this command center, the homeowner or employee will be able to access and operate a wide range of appliances or office equipment from any location, allowing them to perform a large variety of tasks simultaneously that once required on-site and undivided attention.

The impact upon our professional lives of these new and expanding technologies will be equally dramatic. Our physical presence at a particular place will no longer be as important as it once was, since we will have the full range of options of work or home regardless of our location. As a result, the psychological and geographic boundaries between work and family/office and home increasingly will fade in the 21st century. At the same time, these technology combinations will continue to increase the speed of ordinary work and household tasks, shortening deadlines and creating an urgency to accomplish more within the same period. While one outcome will be the continued advancement of productivity, it also is likely that the accessibility, convenience, and expectations of work will result in an escalation of time demands from professional versus personal selves, further exacerbating role conflict and interpersonal stress.

An additional concern involves the content and style of communications using technology that removes the source from the receiver of an instantaneous message. With the courage of separation that face-to-face interactions disallow, consumers, employees, children, and students say and ask things via e-mail and the Internet that would never

have crossed their minds during in-person conversations. Further, this false bravado also permits them to copy messages to a large number of other individuals at little or no cost in time or transmission. Another concern entails technology's role in the development of virtual reality. From the marketplace to the workplace, individuals can participate in activities while in the sanctuary of their own private spaces—with no face-to-face interaction with other humans. The main benefit for both sides of this exchange is greater convenience, but the bonds of such affiliations are likely to be weaker than traditional relationships. Therefore, our previous loyalty to brands, organizations, or employers may give way to a growing focus on price, value, and external compensation. The dramatic sales growth of firms such as Amazon.com, Travelocity, and Monster.com attests to these changes.

## **ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM**

These challenges may be met by a variety of adaptive strategies that exploit identifiable opportunities and modify or neutralize recognizable threats. The discussion that follows describes a set of four interrelated adaptations that operate across these challenges: strategic thinking in the 21st century, mentoring as cross-generational leadership, encouraging selves management throughout one's career, and creating a compassionate organization. As with the challenges themselves, they represent just a few among many possibilities for the future. Nonetheless, organizational achievement in the new millennium may be dependent upon their successful implementation.

### **Strategic Thinking**

The strategic planning process that dominated the latter half of the 20th century provided the impetus for managers to focus at least some of their attention away from short-term problems and issues to long-term

opportunities and threats. The starting point of this process typically involved representatives from within and outside the corporate headquarters gathering together to examine organizational performance under previous strategic directions. If performance indicators met or exceeded expectations, the tendency was to "stay the course" and project the same or highly similar goals and objectives onto the planning horizon. However, under conditions of real or perceived failure, the analysis turned to a consideration of external (e.g., competitive) and internal (e.g., operational) factors and causes. Depending upon the conclusions reached, changes may have been made to the strategies pursued by the firm, to the details of their execution, or to both.

While the strategic planning process helped to professionalize management theory and practice, it suffers from several limitations and constraints as we progress into the 21st century. First, its focus on the status quo may be inappropriate in a technological age with a diverse consumer base that brings rapid and unforeseen changes from a variety of sources. Second, its top-down style of leadership, where the chosen few divine appropriate paths for the remainder of the organization, may not be appropriate for future generations who wish to control their own destinies and feel that their beliefs, opinions, and expectations should be expressed and heeded. Third, such planning may lead to an emphasis on narrowly defined job responsibilities that are less likely to meet the needs of a dynamic business environment or the ambitions of young professionals entering the workforce seeking flexible and vibrant career paths.

An alternative paradigm involves augmenting and modifying the formal planning process to include the infusion of strategic thinking throughout the organization. In order to accomplish this change, firms must facilitate the development of a corporate ethic and culture based upon a long-term vision of a successful future that is shared widely by a variety of internal and external constituencies. This leadership practice eschews a focus

on the extension of the status quo in favor of the recreation or renewal of the firm continuously over time by organizational members. Such an approach also precludes a top-down philosophy or style of management, requiring widespread collaboration within and across organizational functions and hierarchies. Such a participative, democratic environment is more compatible with the expectations of Generation Y members entering the workforce. Parents, schools, and other forces in society have taught them that they are valued, and that their contributions are important; hence they are entering the workplace seeking to be heard and recognized. Finally, highly detailed job specifications that limit the ability of workers to respond to existing and future opportunities and concerns must give way to a sense of empowerment. Such enhanced responsibility and flexibility will allow employees to make the decisions and perform the tasks necessary to accomplish superordinate goals tied to their shared vision. Again, young workers are increasingly demanding this kind of environment, one in which they can make contributions and continue to grow and learn. Flatter organizational forms that spawned successful firms such as Microsoft Corp. and a host of now-defunct dot.com organizations are consistent with these generational needs.

## **Mentorship**

Most organizations have informal or formal programs designed to orient new employees to the products, markets, coworkers, or culture of the firm. The time horizons for such orientations range from a few hours to many months, with the goal of ensuring that organizational members have the appropriate backgrounds to perform their designated job functions. On occasion, the term "mentorship" is used to suggest that the focus is on creating relationships among employees that allow new members to learn from more experienced members who have attained high status within the firm. Unfortunately, the few mentoring programs that exist tend

to be short-term in nature, emphasizing friendship and interpersonal support rather than long-term organizational effectiveness and productivity. Given the idiosyncrasies of the generations that will dominate the early part of this century and the dynamic nature of technological change, formal mentoring programs that fully integrate workers into organizational life may become increasingly essential.

One of the most important steps in the mentorship process is the selection of capable mentors. The tendency may be to choose the wise older sage who has extensive experience with the firm, or the younger rising star who has exceeded all expectations of job performance. While both are appropriate for certain members, a one-size-fits-all mentality may be inadequate for successful cross-generational management. Instead, a formal pairing of mentors and the mentored should be based on potential professional and personal synergies between them that will help both parties benefit during particular stages of their careers. Developing a successful program requires wide boundaries for acceptable activities and the necessary resources and time flexibility for regular and productive interactions. From brainstorming sessions on new product ideas to the role-playing of difficult conversations with customers or employees, such activities allow mentor and mentored to establish mutually satisfying relationships that lead to organizational success.

Over time the mentorship requirements of employees evolve, as mentors and mentored mature, change positions, or leave the firm altogether. Occasionally a change may occur when the relationship has run its natural course and one or both parties feel that additional gains are unlikely. The restructuring of the firm or the reengineering of the organization's strategic focus across products and markets also may necessitate adjustments within or across mentorship relationships. As a result, the formal mentorship program should work to match and rematch organizational members on both sides of this exchange relationship

throughout their work lives. These connections among mentors and mentored need to be as fluid as possible, allowing for starts and finishes of pairings as they complete their useful life cycles. In the end, the overriding goal is to improve organizational commitment across generations and advance individual and firm goals in an ever-changing world.

Intel Corp. provides one example of an innovative and successful mentoring program. Rather than assigning mentors by geographic location, department or job title, the company's matchmaking process makes assignments based on the set of skills to be acquired. This means that an administrative assistant who is expert at navigating informal internal networks may be selected to mentor an upper-level manager, or that a youthful technology-savvy employee may be chosen to share his knowledge with an older, more senior employee. The Intel program connects individuals via intranet and e-mail, facilitating the rapid diffusion of knowledge and cultural values and practices throughout the ranks of its geographically dispersed employees. In addition, written contracts and tight deadlines are used to ensure that mentoring goals are accomplished quickly. Finally, and perhaps most important, any Intel employee, from factory worker to top management, may participate in the voluntary program.

### **Selves Management**

As discussed previously, the absolute number and self-imposed demands of the various "selves" accumulated over time by Baby Boomers have created significant role stress for them during much of their adult lives. Their daily routines typically involve moving quickly from one task to the next in order to meet the role responsibilities associated with their personal and professional selves. Conflicts within and among selves are commonplace, especially for many female workers who face a lose-lose situation. They often must choose between feeling like "good parents" who ignore important aspects of their

jobs or meeting the demands of work while disregarding their children's needs. Given the anxiety of failing one or the other, this generation is in a perpetual hurry to get one thing done so that they can move on to the next. At best they succeed with most tasks, but fail to derive the pleasure that comes with living fully in the moment. At worst, they perform below their own inflated expectations on a regular basis and provide poor role models for subsequent generations.

This self-management approach will become increasingly untenable as we progress into the 21st century and Generations X and Y expand their own personal and professional selves. The almost complete integration of computer-based technology into our daily existences will exacerbate the situation, further blurring the lines between our work and home lives. The traditional demarcations between our self-definitions associated with what we do for a living and who we are in our private worlds may fade away, leaving a truly "blended" self in time and space. Therefore, a primary challenge for managers requires looking beyond the typical boundaries of the work environment as they seek to help employees develop appropriate synergies among selves.

The natural inclination may be to extend the principles of time management to this dilemma in the belief that one can deal with conflicts across selves by increasing the efficiency of task performance. However, such a strategy is likely to meet serious limitations as the roles of Generations X and Y continue to grow, and timelines for work responsibilities continue to contract in the face of technological advances. In truth, time can be managed to improve productivity—but additional allotments cannot be manufactured. Thus, it may be in the best interests of managers in the 21st century to help workers develop selves-management strategies that maximize performance as well as fulfillment across various personal and professional selves. Part of this assignment may require greater organizational flexibility concerning when, where, and how employees perform job-related tasks, so that they may

attend to essential non-work responsibilities as well. For example, on-site daycare and eldercare facilities will become increasingly essential for employees whose jobs require their physical presence. Equally important, though often overlooked, are organizational practices and activities that foster a sense of community and mutual respect, liking, and caring among employees. This is especially critical as technology continues to make it easier to avoid the face-to-face interaction and personal attention that are at the heart of meaningful human relationships.

Nike Inc. has organized its global headquarters consistent with this perspective. Nike has developed a campus environment at its Beaverton, Oregon facility that provides a variety of services to meet professional and personal needs. Exercise facilities allow employees to engage in virtually any sport or physical activity throughout the day. There are a number of restaurants, from a sports bar to a fine dining establishment, where employees gather to chat informally or just unwind. Shopping for clothing or gifts often occurs at the Nike store, and workers receive steep discounts off retail prices. Parents can participate in a number of family events sponsored by the company, and their young children are given daycare services in a nearby building.

### **Compassionate Organizations**

The previous three recommendations combine to create the compassionate organization in the 21st century. Such a firm recognizes and appreciates the needs and desires of major internal and external constituencies, and it operates to find synergies between the goals of these sub-groups and the larger institution. This vigilance goes beyond the traditional market-driven approach that was popularized during the latter part of the previous century, to include a fuller understanding of and dedication to meeting the many and varied requirements of human existence. While this attentiveness embraces constituencies beyond that of consumers and workers, the remainder of this

sub-section will concentrate on these two in order to be consistent with earlier discussions.

To elicit and maintain the interest and allegiance of the younger generations that will come of age in the 21st century, the compassionate organization must become an exciting, fulfilling place to work. This excitement will result naturally from the dynamic nature of the larger environment, including the changing technological landscape and the absolute number of new and revolutionary ideas, products, and work processes. The compassionate organization must recognize their benefits and drawbacks for meeting the full range of needs of customers and employees, helping both to become and to remain productive and satisfied with their personal and professional lives. One aspect of this concept that is often overlooked—especially within a work context—is the elicitation of sheer enjoyment or fun in activities. As the generations advance and future generations appear, their blended selves may fail to distinguish between work and play, and their search for meaningful experiences may cause them to gravitate towards activities that are stimulating emotionally as well as intellectually. Ideo, the product design firm based in Palo Alto, provides an outstanding example of this kind of open environment in which work and play are not oppositional, but instead complementary and creativity-enhancing.

Successful firms will acknowledge the past without holding on to its tenets as if they define the future. One possible strategy is the creation of a fluid organizational structure that is member-friendly, embracing the complete person of existing as well as new consumers and workers. Needs and desires are understood and embraced in all their diversity, allowing for significant revisions to strategic thinking and practice. Additionally, the compassionate organization is future-oriented, constantly monitoring, in tune with, and changing for important constituencies so that these groups can visualize participation with the firm for the long run. In the end, a new organizational form may

emerge that defies traditional constraints of time, place, and the status quo.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

As the opening quote suggests, organizations in the 21st century must prepare themselves for the challenges ahead. A significant challenge will be the rise of the new consumer due to demographic, cultural, and socio-economic shifts, along with the transformation of marketplace-exchange relationships through the persistent application of the Internet. Another challenge involves marketing to and managing succeeding generations, especially the members of Generation Y, who have experienced and continue to experience major differences in upbringing from their parents' cohort. As the boundaries between our personal and professional selves increasingly are blurred, conflicts will continue to arise, but opportunities for reciprocal enrichment should be embraced as well. Technological advances overlay all of these challenges, as innovations become

progressively more ubiquitous and merge or blend together.

In order to adapt to these challenges, 21st century firms must alter customary ways of operating. One possibility is the augmentation of the traditional planning process with strategic thinking that emphasizes organizational renewal and employee empowerment. Another adaptation involves the creation of a formal mentorship program that operates throughout workers' careers, enhancing their performance and commitment to the firm. Consistent with this recommendation is the support of self-management that recognizes the increasingly blended nature of our various roles and the need for satisfaction across them. These adaptations come together within the compassionate organization of the 21st century, which must create an exciting and dynamic environment that is open to new ideas, is member-friendly, and is focused on personal and organizational success.



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