

Will You Become a Connected and Boundless Leader?

Deanna Brown

Today I watched a virtual graduation. It was held in an outdoor area with all of the protocols in place to maintain physical distance while finding ways to increase the “connection” we all crave. The thoughts that swam in my mind took me back decades to when I received my diploma. At that time, the rules society commanded—and specifically in my social environment—were very different. The messages were loud and clear. What career to choose as a female (for your entire life), how women should “behave” in the workplace and at home, who you could love and marry and how POC fit in to it all were VERY different.

As I watched the beaming faces of those young students, my heart did a 10x expansion. I was thinking about what is in front of them. A boundless world. The understanding that they can choose any career. Multiple careers, in fact. They can listen to their hearts and souls about how they’d like to contribute to the world. Young women especially can soar to heights never before reached and the proverbial “glass ceiling” really just becomes an ancient euphemism for an oppressive culture that held progress back in so many ways. This generation of new adults comes on to the playing field with skills, abilities, beliefs and dreams that the world has never seen before. Gen Z is digitally native. They are more ethnically and racially diverse. They are more educated. They’ll make up 24 million of the eligible voting population this November. Until COVID-19 began to shut down the globe, they stood to inherit a strong US economy and low unemployment. And in one breath, it all changed.

Now they are the ones who will eventually take on the largest

burden, along with Millennials, to fix the planet on so many fronts. Hugely complex issues that have plagued us, often for generations. Deeply embedded beliefs around racism. LGBTQ rights. Climate change and animal habitat. Our educational system is in a panicked stage of restructure. Gender equality still has a long path ahead. We need to create a better economy where more people have opportunities to participate and thrive. Let's build more companies with a heart and soul that add goodness to the world. Affordable health care. How we govern. How we maintain safety. How we **TREAT EACH OTHER.**

Maybe as they walked up within 6 feet of their principal today, they are thinking about these things. Maybe not. I certainly wasn't absorbed by the world and its callings when I was in their shoes. They're different though. Informed. Engaged. Aware like no generation before.

Recently, I wrote about my belief that we're at the precipice of a huge leadership reset. A reset we've never done before. All the old rules just don't apply. They don't make sense. In order for us to solve so many challenges, we'll need a new mindset. New ways of communicating with each other are required. Connecting at a level that wasn't ever part of our rules is key. Our cultures within organizations need to evolve overnight. The pace of current life won't allow for the long-haul change we've become accustomed to.

As leaders from Gen X and Boomers like myself, we have an important responsibility before us. We can fruitlessly attempt to "go back to business and life as usual" or we can decide to let go of the things that aren't a match for the world we have now. We can bury our heads and believe that at some point down the road, we'll get back to our comfort zone. Or we can elevate our skills and beliefs in order to guide the coming generations. We can make fun of what many see as shortcomings, or we can embrace the fresh outlooks and innovative methods they bring. We can choose to level-up as leaders to be the next best version of ourselves. What are your habits?

Communication styles? Beliefs? How do you show up each day? One benefit of being in an older generation is wisdom. We've run the races. Hit the ditches. Climbed the mountains. Had lots of wins. Experienced plenty of defeats. We've solved problems, designed innovative products and grown companies. We created the internet! That's some big stuff. We've raised children and said goodbye to parents. Having some insight into that wisdom is a gap for the generations coming after us.

If anyone has the answers for how to tackle the day and navigate through this chaos with success and joy and a little energy to spare, please speak up. For me, I'm fully willing to admit I don't have it all figured out. I'm not entirely sure what [leadership](#) needs to be going forward. How should companies plan for the short and long term? What scenarios would we plan for? What does a healthy work culture really look like now? How do we solve the ugly problems together? I have quite a few clues and thoughts. I'm leaning on my good sense of an open mind, open heart and actively listening to others. Really listening. I'm fostering more and more mentoring relationships with the young cool kids now in our companies who are often beginning to manage and lead others. I learn a lot from them. Plus, it also makes me feel young and encouraged, which is a pretty tough thing some days.

So my challenge to you is this: Take some time. Some uninterrupted time by yourself. Who do you need to become to help create the better versions of our world? What things about yourself will you change? What will you let go of? What will you take a chance on? How will you lead your teams in a connected, human-centered way? How will you form genuine connections to those around you? What does a boundless leader look like now? The invitation is open to send me your answers. We are really all learning together.

About the Author:



*Transformative Leader
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With a background in foundational business growth, leadership development, sales and marketing and strategic planning, I've focused those skills to help leaders grow from a handful of dedicated team members to a \$1B+ profitable organization. From the groundwork of needs and ideas to the unifying of teams and goals, I've found passion in watching those business communities thrive.