

# Five leadership trends to watch in 2020

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The more things change, the more they stay the same. This is true in life and in business. The leadership trends I am seeing with my clients are nothing new at first blush, but within each one is a changing dynamic that good leaders should acknowledge and address.

*I believe now more than ever we need to be cognizant of change going on around us and the requisite implications for leadership.*



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## Change and Transformation

Most of the companies I work with are in a state of continuous change and transformation. Employees may groan when they hear about yet another transformation plan and particularly how it will affect their team and individual role. Employees have “initiative fatigue.” It may in fact feel to employees that transformation is a platitude and nothing will meaningfully change for the better. For this reason, leaders need to be more effective at outlining a comprehensive roadmap that goes beyond a project plan. The road map is not just an intellectual journey, it should include actions to address common corresponding feelings that accompany change. They need to attend to team dynamics and individual team member adaption in a manner that perhaps 10 years ago they did not.

## Transparency

While transformation abounds, the rumors will also flow freely. In today’s digital age, news and rumors travel at unprecedented speed. If leaders don’t thoughtfully provide information, employees will fill in the gaps with their own information, often their worst fears. Leaders need to equip employees and stakeholders with strategic and accurate information in a manner that is much more detailed and comprehensive than in years past when only the top needed to know. It will be hard for many to “let go” for fear of giving insight to competitors, but in the long run it will build trust, alignment and understanding among employees and stakeholders. If you don’t have any new information that is okay – then communicate that message.

## Employee Growth

We need to grow our employees. That will never change. However, the world has shifted a bit. The old paradigm was to retain employees forever, which was a positive indicator. Now, companies and their leaders need to remain committed to employee development while acknowledging that employees will expect to move up and eventually out of the company. But you cannot afford not to invest in your people. When they leave, see it as a positive sign of development. If you treat your high potential employees right, they may leave for a bigger opportunity, but their odds of returning are substantially higher.

## Entrepreneurship

Employee growth leads me to my next trend: Entrepreneurship. In today’s climate where work/life balance is a priority, employees may be more willing to take the

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risks associated with starting their own business in order to be their own boss. According to [smallbizgenius.net](http://smallbizgenius.net), the entrepreneurship failure rate has never been lower, with only 22.5% of businesses closing after a year. Furthermore, successful businesses are usually started by experienced professionals – both men and women – who want to apply their skillset in ways that are meaningful to them. Perhaps then we should see entrepreneurship as a positive index overall. At the same time, it may also remind leaders to encourage employees to take reasoned risk and test new ideas at work, while also honoring the keen desire for enrichment outside of one's career/job.

### Diversity

Diversity is definitely not a new topic, but how it is applied is evolving. From a U.S. perspective, the need to continue to build diverse employees and leaders is of utmost importance, across the full diversity spectrum – ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, experience (e.g., industry, tenure in world of work), business phase – start up, turn around, communication style etc. Our companies need to reflect our marketplace, otherwise we are missing massive opportunities. This is not a new notion. What is new, however, is how we react to it within the company. Your workplace needs to be fully prepared to embrace different leadership styles, trust in them, resist the urge to shrink away from different, and allow enough time for diverse leaders to make their mark in a meaningful – if different – manner. For example, a Baby Boomer female leader who had to “claw her way to the top” will lead differently than a Gen X leader who faced a different context and set of challenges as she grew in her role, who will lead differently than a Millennial or Gen Y leader. Different is not bad. It's diverse.

### Summary

While the categories may remain the same over the years, I believe now more than ever we need to be cognizant of change going on around us and the requisite implications for leadership. The call to leadership in this decade means meaningful employee engagement and communication, inviting new ideas and perspectives, and development for development sake – letting go of the notion of the 30-year employee. Leadership has the advantage and disadvantage of social media and technology. Harness them, embrace today's realities, and see your leadership effectiveness soar.