What’s Your Leadership Style?

Business leaders, like the corporate culture they inspire, are heavily influenced by a number of factors. From geographic location and professional background to education, gender and life experiences, there are a number of dynamics that shape leadership styles. However, few things are quite as powerful in shaping a leader as the generation in which they grew up. We are all products of our upbringing.

Today, most active business owners fall into the Baby Boomer, Generation X or Generation Y cohort - but their predecessors, the Greatest Generation and subsequent Silent Generation formed what we now call the traditionalist style.

**The Traditionalists** spent their most formative years in the Great Depression and learned to be frugal. Because of the World Wars, many members of this generation experienced an extensive strict military presence – which in turn led them to become stern business owners who focused heavily on discipline and traditional rule sets.

**The Baby Boomers** however, brought about a unique change. Although they were born to traditionalist parents, they rejected and redefined many of these values. The tumultuous 1960s and youth revolution led to a less strict leadership style. Having grown up with parents who derived their financial habits from the Great Depression, Baby Boomers fought hard to give the next generation a more cushioned lifestyle. Though they retained many traditionalist concepts - such as a rigid, set schedule and less collaborative environment – they paved the way with a slightly softer leadership style.

**Generation X and Generation Y** (often called the Millennials) have shaped a unique leadership style that is unlike anything experienced in history – and this is due largely to technology. As new technologies grow and change, and companies become global, there is greater room (and demand) for flexibility. Today, leaders are more collaborative and versatile – allowing employees to work from home and put in unconventional hours to complete projects.

The current economic state is very likely to mold the next generation of leaders. Present college graduates struggle to obtain jobs – more than ever before. Indeed, the lasting effects of the recession could either trigger a return to traditionalism or lead to another, newer leadership style. Only time will tell – but history does have a way of repeating itself.