

A LEADERSHIP PROFILE OF ENTREPRENEURS  
ACROSS THE GENERATIONS:  
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

### A LEADERSHIP PROFILE OF ENTREPRENEURS ACROSS THE GENERATIONS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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The purpose of this exploratory study was to identify leadership characteristics of entrepreneurs and to determine how these traits differ, if at all, across societal generations. A sample of 76 entrepreneurs participated by completing an assessment that measured their behavioral style, motivators, and professional and personal competencies. From this sample, 14 entrepreneurs were selected for semi-structured interviews in order to understand (1) their values and beliefs, (2) how they approach employee engagement, and (3) how they self-report on how they influence their organizations and teams. Each of these areas considered differences in generational perspectives. This exploratory study utilized mixed methods, combining the assessment results, demographic information, and the qualitative interviews, which added depth to the survey results.

The study yielded a consistent leadership profile of entrepreneurs; however, the generational differences were less significant because the entrepreneurial characteristics dominated the generational characteristics. The entrepreneurial leaders self-identified more with being entrepreneurs than with being leaders, even though they demonstrated strong leadership acumen. Many of the entrepreneurial leaders experience a dichotomy between being fiercely proud of their staff and frustration over

managerial challenges. An understanding and application of entrepreneurial leadership characteristics will help drive results in high-performing organizations.