



# Individualization and value pluralism

Accommodating  
'the me generation'

The nature of leadership will have to change dramatically if organizations are to harness the benefits and counter the negative effects of the six megatrends identified by Hay Group as likely to have the greatest effect on organizations and their leaders over the coming decade. Here we examine the organizational and leadership implications of one of these megatrends, 'individualization and value pluralism' >>

Individualization is the growing freedom of choice expected by and granted to individuals within societies and communities – and it is a global phenomenon. Careers play an increasingly important role in the quest for self-fulfillment and self-expression, a shift that is driving greater convergence between private and working lives and a desire by individuals to integrate personal

and professional goals ('value pluralism'). Non-standard biographies and careers are now more commonplace, and traditional concepts of loyalty are being challenged – people's loyalties will be to their social networks rather than their employer. The trend is reinforced by the changing nature of these relationship networks – individuals have fewer strong and more loose connections.

Individualization has an enormous impact on employees' loyalty and motivation to perform, with 'soft factors' such as recognition, self-development, self-direction, values-driven engagement and work-life balance often taking precedence over traditional factors like pay and promotion.

Individualization is also underpinned by the shift from mass to micro markets.

### Organizational implications

Highly individual (and increasingly heterogeneous) teams want to be able to organize themselves, and redesigning work processes to better suit individuals rather than the organization has now become *de rigueur*. This involves establishing conditions that promote independent work and time management, so allowing employees time for their personal projects. What's more, with creative output recognized as a main driver for economic success, a new 'creative class' is springing up – and, with longer education, career breaks, frequent job changes and even periods of unemployment, they don't necessarily fit into the conventional leadership mold.

Individualization leads to decentralized workplaces characterized by flatter, more flexible, structures, cross-functional project teams and higher turnover.

### Leadership implications

The post-heroic leader will need to balance the roles of boss, mediator and coach, allowing teams more freedom and autonomy while securing their commitment and keeping them focused on team and corporate objectives. They will need to integrate flexible rules into formal structures to provide a framework for pluralism. Team leaders have to be highly skilled in conflict prevention and resolution, and be able to rapidly reorganize teams and provide them with temporary stability, given the likelihood of key members leaving at some point.

But leaders will also have to recalibrate their criteria for leadership and rethink their approach to loyalty and retention, fostering good individual relationships with current and former team members to avoid a domino-style disintegration should one person leave. They will have to work harder at generating personal loyalty, through accommodating employees' requirements, enabling self-directed ways of working and individualized leadership, and developing relationships beyond the direct work environment to reflect the continuing value to the organization of those who leave its formal employ. Departure no longer equates to 'disloyalty'.

“ Avoid domino-style disintegration should one person leave ”



#### About Hay Group

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We have over 3000 employees working in 87 offices in 49 countries. Our insight is supported by robust data from over 125 countries. Our clients are from the private, public and not-for-profit sectors, across every major industry.

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