

Generational Leadership

American Legion Leadership College

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Class Objectives

- Review of today's volunteers
- Understand why change is hard
- Explore Generational Leadership
- Discuss cycles of resistance and acceptance
- Recognize needs to pivot

Today's American Volunteers

Dramatic decline
since the pandemic



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graph TD; A[Dramatic decline since the pandemic] --> B[In 2023 only 28.3% of Americans formally join group(s) and volunteer their time]; B --> C[Most organizations lose more than a third every year];
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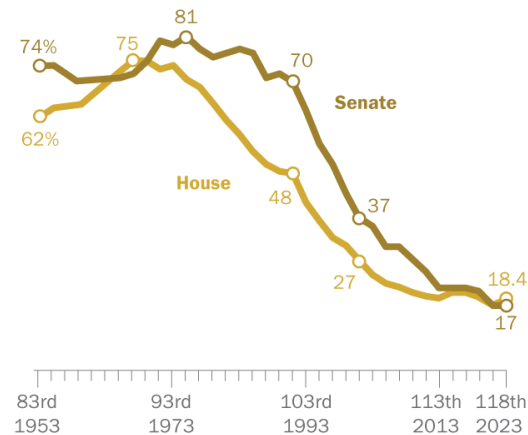
Today's Veteran

- In 1980, about 18% of US adults were veterans which fell to 6% in 2022 (approx. 16.2 million)
- As of 2023, 15.8 million Americans identified as veterans
- More than a quarter of veterans are over age 75
- The number of veterans is expected to continue to decline over the next 25 years

LOUD Is PROUD

Share of members in Congress who are veterans has fallen in recent decades

% of members with previous military service



Note: Data does not include nonvoting delegates or commissioners.

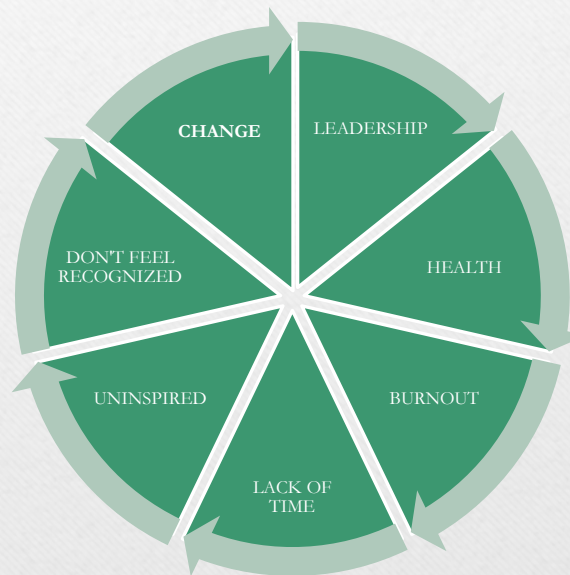
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of data from Military Times, Congressional Research Service, Brookings Institution and House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

As the nation's largest VSO, we relentlessly champion veterans and service members on Capitol Hill, support military families, and are dedicated to preventing veteran suicide.

#1 Reason Volunteers Quit

NOT MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Why Change is Hard

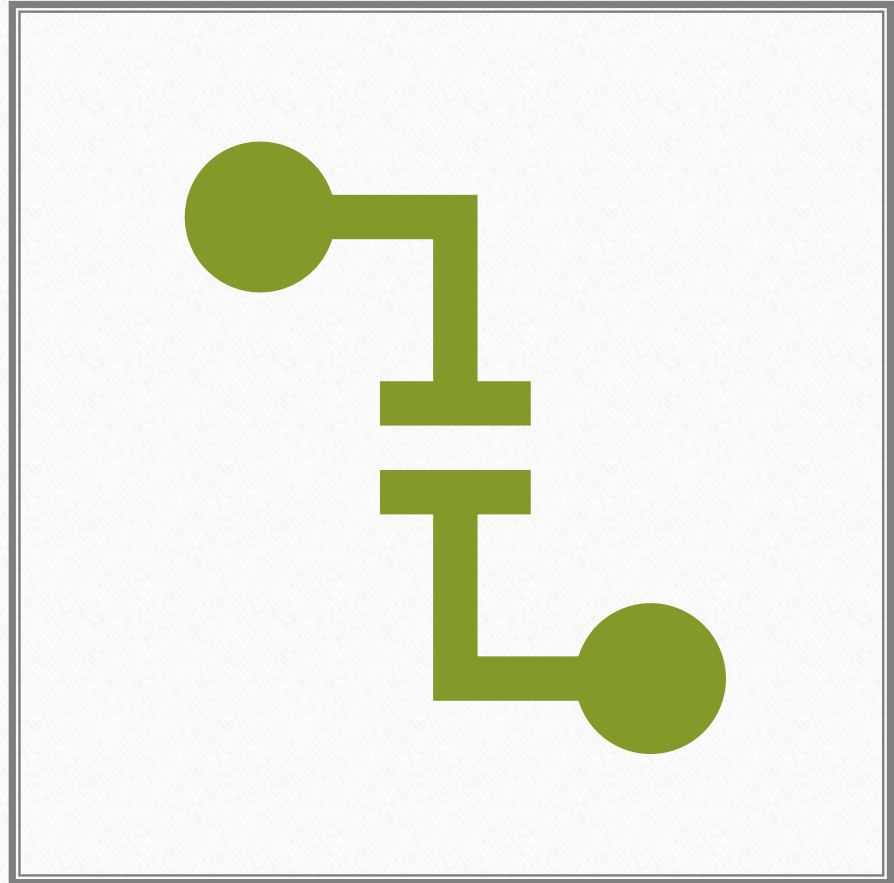
Biological
Resistance – Fight
or Flight
Response

Fear of losing
identity,
traditions,
relevance

Generational
values tied to
'how we've always
done it'

The Change Kink

Stages: Denial →
Resistance → Exploration
→ Acceptance



Generational Leadership Breakdown: 20-30 year olds (GenZ/Millennials)

Generation	Strengths	Risk	Change Response	Watch Points
*Emerging	*Energetic *Innovation *digital-native	*Impulsive *Inexperience *Spontaneous	*Often push for rapid change	*Watch for lack of historical context

Generational Leadership Breakdown: 40-50 year olds (Millennials/GenX)

Generation	Strengths	Risk	Change Response	Watch Points
Mid-Career	*Pragmatic *Balance Ambition *Resource Control	*Risk Aversion Grows	*Open to change with a plan	*Watch for burnout or tunnel vision

Generational Leadership Breakdown

60-70 year olds (Baby Boomers)

Generation	Strengths	Risk	Change Response	Watch Points
Senior	*Wisdom *Network *Strategic	*Resistant to disruptive change	*Support change when purpose is clear	Watch for “we tried that already” mindset

Generational Leadership Breakdown

80-90 year olds (Traditionalists)

Generation	Strengths	Risk	Change Response	Watch Points
Legacy Leaders	*Institutional memory *Storytelling	*Nostalgia *Defensive of traditions	*Resist change without connection to core values	Watch for disengagement or detachment

Generational Leadership

Encompasses:

- Leading
- Managing
- Engaging

Leverages:

- Strengths
- Perspective
- Experience

Promotes a successful
Post



The Cycle of Leadership & Change

Disrupt → Optimize →

Preserve → Repeat

Leading Across Generations – Tools

Empathy Mapping

Tailor
Communication
(Tech vs. In-
person)

Avoid
Stereotypes—see
individuals, not
just age

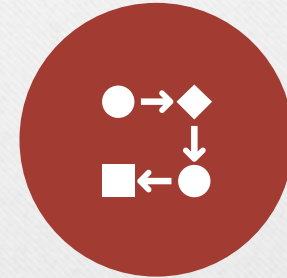
Pivot Mindset



PIVOT MINDSET:
ADAPT WHILE
PRESERVING VALUES



FIXED MINDSET:
RESIST AND RISK
IRRELEVANCE



ASK: “WHAT DO WE
PRESERVE, WHAT DO
WE EVOLVE?”

Pivot or Die

-

Adaptability
is Survival

Adapt or
become
irrelevant

Change
isn't
betrayal—
it's survival

Growth is
cyclical,
not linear

Generational Leadership Entails

- Focus on Future
- Pass on Value
- Lead by Example
- Build a Strong Foundation
- Plan for Future Leaders

American Legion-Facing Changes

- Demographics shifting
- Technology demands increasing
- Recruitment/retention challenges

Group Activity: Tech Applications

- Instructions:
- Break into groups at your tables (4-6 people)
- Determine what generational sector(s) are represented in your group
- Discuss Tech Applications i.e. Artificial Intelligent(AI) and how to move forward
- Step into another generation's shoes and try to feel how the change would be accepted.

Key Takeaways

- Change is hard because it threatens identity
- Leadership is cyclical: disrupt, optimize, preserve
- Pivoting is essential for survival
- Mentorship and respect bridge generational gaps
- Continue to explore tech applications

Thank You / Q&A

- Thank you for your service and leadership
- Questions?