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Leadership

Becoming the Boss

New Rules for the Next Generation of Leaders

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

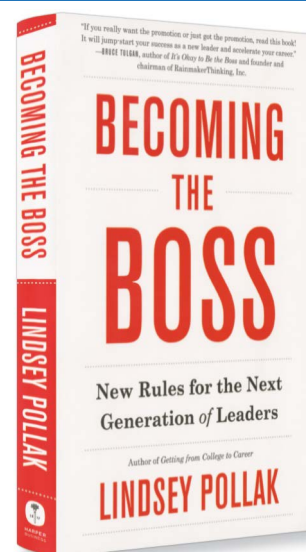
We are in the midst of a leadership revolution, as power passes from Baby Boomers to Millennials. All grown up, the highly educated Generation Y is moving into executive positions in corporations and government, as well as running their own businesses. Author Lindsey Pollak reinvents the concept of management for the new generation, offering a fresh and relevant approach to career success that shows them how to make the next step: becoming a leader.

Becoming the Boss is a brisk, tech-savvy success manual filled with real-world, actionable tips from an expert they respect and relate to. Pollak defines what leadership is and draws on original research, her own extensive experience and interviews with newly minted Gen Y managers and entrepreneurs around the world, to share the secrets of what makes them successful leaders — and shows young professionals how to use that knowledge to rise in their own careers.

From learning to develop a style that appeals to your older colleagues, to discovering the key trends affecting your career, to mastering the classic rules of excellence that never go out of style, *Becoming the Boss* helps you identify your next professional move and shows you how to get there.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to learn, lead and last in today's diverse, high-tech workforce.
- To harness the positive traits of the millennial generation to become a better manager.
- To build your brand, communication skills and network to lead in the 21st century.



by Lindsey Pollak

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: BECOMING THE BOSS

by Lindsey Pollak

The author: Lindsey Pollak is a keynote speaker, corporate consultant and internationally recognized expert on millennial workplace issues. She is an official ambassador for LinkedIn and the author of *Getting from College to Career: Your Essential Guide to Succeeding in the Real World*. *Forbes* selected her career advice blog as one of the Top 100 Websites for Your Career.

Becoming the Boss: New Rules for the Next Generation of Leaders by Lindsey Pollak. Copyright © 2014 by Lindsey Pollak. Summarized by permission of the publisher, HarperCollins Publishers. 320 pages, \$16.99, ISBN 97800-06-232331-6.

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Introduction

Enormous demographic, economic and technological shifts are taking place right now in business, government, law, the media, health care, the nonprofit sector and almost any other realm you want to work in. These shifts are both exciting and daunting, and they are fundamentally changing the world in which you'll lead today and into the future. The leadership advice of the past is simply not enough to prepare you for today's complex realities.

You will lead through a demographic revolution. Becoming the boss in a time of demographic change means that you will need to build your skills in communicating with and managing people of different generations who have different expectations and styles of working.

You will lead through an economic revolution. You are becoming the boss in what some economists call a "post-employment" economy, in which companies can function and thrive without hiring as many workers or paying them as highly as in the past. For the next several years at least, you'll likely need to learn how to lead within the confines of a limited budget and a limited number of employees.

You will lead through a technological revolution. As a boss in high-tech times, you'll need to become an expert at managing through technology, including overseeing virtual employees, handling the etiquette of new communication tools, and keeping current with important new apps, networks and devices.

All of these demographic, economic and technological shifts add up to the fact that we are living in a make-or-break moment in modern history. It is a moment that will

require a new generation of leaders who are as dynamic and revolutionary as the times we are experiencing. ●

PART I: LEARN

Prep

How well you are capable of leading other people begins, first and foremost, with how well you lead yourself. You will be a far better leader of others if you spend time building your knowledge, your mindset and your attitude first. Here are five key ways to become a leader on the inside so you're ready to be a leader on the outside:

Don't fear the fear. Career fear is totally natural. The trick is to keep moving forward despite the fear. Decide that you want it more than you are afraid of it. Deciding that you want it is not just about moving past fear; it's also about committing 100 percent to what you want. You'll have to reach for what you want with conviction. When it comes to leadership, in particular, fear is okay, but wishy-washiness is not.

Fill the tanks. Be a sponge, and not just in your own field. Because what happens when you fill the tanks with ideas from other realms is that you start to make random connections and come up with really creative ideas.

Three steps to fill the gaps. True leaders are regularly assessing what their gaps are and making plans to improve their knowledge and skill set. Here is a three-step plan:

- 1. Assess your current skill set:** Do you possess the same educational degree or comparable experience/learning as leaders in your field? In what areas



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have other people encouraged you to improve, and have you done so?

2. Take immediate action to fill the gaps you identify:

Take whatever skills you want to acquire, and go find the very best book on the subject. Subscribe to multiple blogs and/or e-newsletters on the topic(s). Register for a class.

3. Practice daily:

You will become smarter and better at anything just by committing to doing it a lot. Let go of perfection, and focus on practice.

Make new friends. Create a support network of people who understand your leadership goals and what it will take to achieve them. Find a community where it's okay to talk about your biggest dreams.

Develop global competence. Here are a few ways to ensure your leadership toolkit includes global competence:

- Talk to people from other countries.
- Read *The Economist*.
- Travel abroad.
- Volunteer for an internationally focused nonprofit organization.
- Take a trip on YouTube. Look at the amazing documentaries out there.

“Take the initiative to educate yourself” is ideal advice when it comes to every element of preparing for and thriving in a leadership position. Leaders don't wait for someone to guide them to where they need to be; they take a deep breath, roll up their sleeves and pursue the necessary action. ●

Be

What kind of leader do you want to be? It's important to think about not only what you want to *do* as a leader but also what you want to *be* as a leader. The concept of personal branding places your reputation and career management almost entirely in your control. Here are four overarching areas to focus on:

Visibility: Are you findable where your desired networking contacts are looking? Leaders need visibility.

Differentiation: This is what gets you noticed and what gets you continually promoted.

Consistency: Sets the tone for your team to be consistent.

Authenticity: Are you genuine in your image and your outreach to people? Maintain your personal integrity always.

What are you known for? Let's start to home in on your unique personal brand as a leader. You want to know what your current reputation is so you can reinforce what you are doing well and build your reputation in new areas you want to be known for. Ask people you trust to describe your professional skills and reputation. Revisit your recent reference letters and performance reviews. What words were used? Look at the Skills and Endorsements section of your LinkedIn profile, and see what skills people in your network have endorsed.

What do you want to be known for? If you overheard the people you lead talking about you, what words would you hope they would use? Start to sprinkle these words into your conversations with the people you lead. Use these words in your resume, professional bio, performance reviews and LinkedIn profile. Use your personal brand traits to check in with yourself when making decisions big and small.

Here are three ways to build your leadership brand before you've got the title or responsibilities to go with it:

Take initiative: You don't actually need a designated leadership role. All you need to do is get things done.

Show commitment: Initiate and take part in conversations about long-term plans for the organization. Volunteer for committees and task forces. Attend non-required events.

Act like a leader: Start acting — appropriately — like you already have the job. Ask yourself, “What would a leader do?”

Personal Leadership Brand Checklist

You always want to be authentic and bring your unique approach to each element of your personal brand, but here are some overall guidelines for managing your offline leadership brand:

- A strong self introduction: Also known as a 30-second pitch or elevator pitch. Take some time to practice describing yourself.
- A confident handshake: One of the easiest things to get right and the worst to get wrong. A good handshake is firm, includes direct eye contact and encloses the other person's full hand.
- A level-up wardrobe: Look the part. Use your wardrobe to build your authority. Get in the habit of dressing one level up from the people you manage.
- Business cards: Business cards provide people with your contact information and can guide people to your preferred method of communication. ●

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Be.com

Your online image can make or break an opportunity you don't even know exists yet. If you want to be a leader in any area, you have to pay attention to what people find when they search your name online. And you have to ensure that what they discover about you on the Internet is consistent with the you they encounter in person.

How to Clean Up Your Online Presence

Google your name. The first few results on Google should reflect the professional presence you most want to project. For most people, this should be your LinkedIn profile because it is 100 percent professional and 100 percent in your control. Other ideal listings might include your bio on your organization's website, your social media profiles, your own website or blog or that of your organization and a positive news story written by or about you.

Negative online content can absolutely hold you back from achieving your leadership goals. The good news is that in many (but not all) cases, you can clean up a less-than-professional online reputation:

Untag, untag, untag: Go through all your profiles. If you find any inappropriate content, delete or untag yourself.

Pay attention to privacy settings: The default setting on most social networks is that everything you share is public. Make privacy settings as tight as possible.

Request removal: If someone else posted offensive content, politely ask the source to remove it.

Build better content with your name attached to it so that search engines find and rank these pages higher than the unwanted links.

Become more social: Build up a positive presence through social networks such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Reddit, Pinterest, Google+ and others.

Accept the attention: When you raise your hand for leadership, you are opening yourself up to public scrutiny and criticism. If your intentions are genuinely good and you keep your focus on doing the best job you can for your constituents (however you define that word in your leadership role), then you should be fine. Just be smart about it.

The Ultimate LinkedIn Guide for New Leaders

Given how important your LinkedIn profile is to your online personal brand, here is a step-by-step process for building a leadership-worthy profile:

1. Study the best: Study the profiles of the people you admire in your particular industry or company. How do they write about themselves? What words and phrases

do they include in their Skills and Endorsements section? What groups do they belong to?

2. Impress with your profile headline: People are busy. They want a concise explanation of who you are and why they might want to know you.

3. Post a professional headshot: People are going to check out what you look like, and what you want to look like is a leader.

4. Craft your summary: Your bio should act as an overview or greatest hits version of your career. Use the third-person voice.

5. Show, don't tell: Include visual examples such as videos of your professional speaking, slide decks from presentations or PDFs of articles.

6. Promote your skills: Skills and Endorsements is where you choose keywords to describe your top talents, and the people in your network give you an endorsement.

7. Customize: Add sections for honors and awards, projects, publications, volunteer experience and causes.

8. Crowdsource: Ask trusted friends or colleagues to review and share feedback.

9. Update frequently: Continually tweak and add to your profile.

Another option for building your online brand is to create what is called a nameplate site. The most popular is About.me, which essentially serves as a one-page Web site to share your contact information and provide links to your social networking profiles and any other sites you want to direct people to. About.me will also provide you with a short custom URL that you can include on business cards or in your email signature line. Nameplate sites can help push positive content about you to the top of your Google rankings as well. ●

PART II: LEAD

Listen

The words we use (and don't use) can make or break our reputations, our projects, our relationships and our organizations. For leaders, the stakes are even higher: one comment from a leader can cause elation, confusion or panic among the ranks. Let's start with some big-picture advice:

It's not about you: Remember that as the leader of a team, you are still a member of that team. *We* is one of the most powerful words in your vocabulary.

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Know your audience: You can't have a one-size-fits-all communication style. You have to be adaptable based on the situation you're in and the people you're speaking to.

Overcommunication trumps undercommunication: Communicate as frequently, honestly and thoroughly as you possibly can.

Actually listen: Start with your audience. What is their perspective? Be open. Don't listen for what you expect to hear. Strive to understand. Don't rush to fill the silence. Pause and think before you respond.

Your method matters: The nuances mean everything. Choose your communication methods carefully.

How to Choose the Right Communication Method

Choose the tool that will best communicate the information to your listener and will achieve the outcome you desire:

- In person: It is still safest to communicate eye-ball-to-eyeball about sensitive issues. In-person communications also give you a better chance to defuse heated situations.
- E-mail: Best for non-urgent communications and for reaching out to someone you've never met.
- Phone: When you can't speak in person and don't want an electronic trail of exactly what you've said, it's safer to pick up the phone. A phone call is often an efficient way to solve a problem or make a decision.
- Voice mail: Valuable in situations where the tone of your voice is essential to your message and you are not able to reach a person directly.
- Instant message: Best for quick, specific and nonsensitive communication, particularly yes/no answers.
- Text: Not always professionally appropriate. I would never text any professional contact unless that person has texted me first.

Become a Master of Meetings

Let's dig into the nitty-gritty of leading meetings, conference calls and formal presentations.

Meetings. Take control, and make every meeting the very best and most efficient it can be. Cancel as many meetings as possible. Invite the minimum number of participants possible. Have a written plan for topics and outcomes. Keep the pace moving forward, or do something to fix it. Put away smartphones. Assign a note-taker to send follow-up assignments. Change it up: meet outside, or have a standup meeting, or surprise your team with treats.

Conference or videoconference calls. Double-check the call-in line and your headset, headphones or microphone. Call in early. Channel your inner radio host. Introduce each agenda item with comments, and ask individuals for feedback by name. Look into your device's camera rather than at the person on the screen.

Presentations. Think of any presentation as an opportunity to promote your leadership brand and win support and respect. Organize your talk in a meaningful, logical way. Tell people up front how long you plan to speak and when they will have the opportunity to ask questions. Keep track of time, and stick to what you've promised. When it comes to visuals, less is more. Your slides should be additive, not central. Rehearse in front of the camera. Plan a great ending. Even for the shortest presentation, you always want to finish strong. ●

Manage

A study at Google found that technical expertise ranked last among the predictors of a boss's effectiveness. Instead, employees most wanted "even-keeled" bosses who made time for one-on-one meetings, helped solve problems, and took an interest in their lives and careers.

You can't become a master manager in a day, or a month or even a year. You'll have to lead before you're totally ready. That is perfectly okay. Lead anyway.

The Three Essential Laws of Twenty-First Century Management

What skills do today's leaders need that are new or different from the skills that past leaders needed? Three overarching themes will permeate many of the specific situations you'll face as a boss:

1. Adaptability to rapid change: Commit to keeping up with technology no matter how busy you become. Also, the more approachable, fair and supportive a manager you are, the less frequent turnover you are likely to see. The pace of change today requires extreme agility and open-mindedness.

2. Cultural awareness: Millennials represent the most diverse generation in American history, which means they will need to cultivate a more inclusive leadership style than previous generations.

3. Transparency: Much of the reason we expect transparency is the Internet. We know more about everything now, so we want to know more about and from our leaders.

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How to Manage People When You Have Zero Experience Managing People

Most first-time managers have no idea what they're doing, and the role of a manager is more complicated today than ever. Very few organizations are good at teaching people how to be good bosses. Many don't provide this training at all, or they provide it too late. Successful leaders offer these suggestions from the new manager trenches:

Be yourself: It's a mistake to put on a new "boss" persona that is not authentic. People will see through that false front, and it can lead to serious fumbles. While it may seem counterintuitive to practice being natural, rehearsal is a helpful strategy.

Launch a listening tour: You have to go out and spend time with the troops. Just be careful that seeking input doesn't turn into managing by consensus.

Drive the truck: If you haven't risen up the ranks, do your best to learn from each employee what his or her daily experiences are and what changes would improve productivity or results.

Secure early wins: People want leaders who can get things done. Early wins can be large or small, ranging from cutting an unpopular "required" report to announcing a new client or funder.

Establish key performance indicators: Tie individual contributions to overall team or organizational goals. Setting key performance indicators (KPIs) for each person will help team members see the big picture and how each will contribute.

Remember that managing is your job ... but make time for the rest of your work: If you have spent an entire day talking to your team members, you have been doing your job. Of course you will also have other responsibilities. Carve out moments in your day that are uninterrupted.

The Feedback Frenzy

Millennials have received more coaching and praise from parents, teachers, professors and coaches throughout their lives, so they enter the workplace expecting the same attention and encouragement from their employers. Employees who want feedback are showing that they want to improve and contribute.

How to give positive feedback: Give a "one-minute praising" by looking that person straight in the eye and telling her what she did well. Tell her how good you as the manager feel about what she did so well. Specific praise is far more meaningful and effective. Consider small ways to recognize achievement, such as quarterly awards, gift cards, flowers, lunch or even a handwritten note.

How to give negative feedback: You'll achieve the best results when your genuine intention is to be constructive. Create an environment where feedback and coaching are routine. Be specific and only criticize the issue at hand. Criticize the behavior and not the person. When the reprimand is over, let it go and move on.

Motivation Nation

Wherever your team members are based, another of your leadership responsibilities is to build and maintain morale. Here are eight ways to do just that:

- Do the opposite of every bad manager you've ever had (such as making fun of employees, deciding not to attend meetings at the last minute, dismissing ideas).
- Manage by walking around. To motivate people, you have to see them, chat with them and understand their day-to-day experience.
- Explain the why. Millennial employees desire to know why they have to accomplish a given task. Everyone wants to feel that his or her work is making a difference.
- Show interest in each person's self-development. "Where do you see yourself in five years?" Genuinely want to know — and support — the answer.
- Motivate different individuals in different ways. Find creative ways to correlate each individual's goals with the bigger picture.
- Encourage excellence. One Millennial leader told me that whenever she assigns a project, she says, "Make it as awesome as you want."
- Provide a safety net. Assure your employees that it's okay to ask questions and occasionally mess up.
- Change it up. Random, unplanned perks can be fantastically motivating in all sorts of situations. ●

Prioritize

How do you lead in a world where the pace of work is so much faster, the amount of information is so much greater, and everyone's stress levels are constantly increasing?

Being busy is not a badge of honor. If you are a leader and you are "slammed" all the time, you are not delegating enough, not organized enough or being dramatic. Learn how to manage a very full schedule without losing your cool. Here are some reminders:

Leadership is a marathon, not a sprint: You won't be perfect every day, and when you stop trying to be perfect, you'll end up better in the long run.

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Take care of the big rocks first. You have to schedule the steps related to the big things before anything else. The smaller things tend to fall into place.

An ounce of planning is worth a pound of work. Stop in your tracks and make a plan. Part of being a leader is making tough choices about where your attention is most needed at any given moment.

Stress is not actually contagious. Remain calm when the people you manage are stressing out. Model the behavior you want.

You can cut down on stress and decision fatigue by routinizing a few trivial choices. And, a few calm, deep breaths can slow your heartbeat and give you a moment to collect your racing thoughts. It's wise to take several breaks throughout the day for at least a few minutes, even on your busiest days, just to give your mind and body a chance to recharge.

Work/Life What?

Work/life balance is now being referred to as “work/life integration” — or, frankly, just “life” — because we've come to realize that the issue is not about equally balancing one's personal and professional lives but integrating them into a complete whole.

In the past, when work/life separation was the norm (in theory at least), employees considered it a perk to work from home or make a personal call at work. Nowadays, almost everyone works from home at least occasionally and expects some level of flexibility. Millennials in particular have fully embraced the constantly connected work/life style.

This is a good thing in many ways, but it can lead to difficulties setting scalable and fair HR policies. Millennial leaders will be the ones to address future workplace issues such as,

- Will there be a concept of “regular work hours” in the future?
- If so, should hourly wage employees be paid overtime for responding to emails after hours?
- Will it be legal to reprimand or fire an employee for something she shared on a personal, privacy-protected social media site?
- Will you allow employees to “bring your own device” to work, and if so, how will you protect sensitive data?

Now let's bring the work/life topic back to you as an individual. There inevitably will be times when personal events conflict with professional events. As the boss, your handling of such moments will be closely observed. Here are some coping strategies:

Don't apologize for how you spend your time. Many successful leaders don't feel the need to explain their schedules and their boundaries. Never apologize for the choices you're making, as long as you're not being irresponsible.

Buy every tool available. It's always worth the expense to acquire any tool that will help you better manage all the various elements of your life as a leader.

Get better at saying no. Here are some of the perks I have enjoyed when I got better at saying no: First, I became significantly clearer on what I really wanted to do, because I challenged myself to say no more often. Second, I accomplished more of my big goals by clearing my calendar. Third, I learned that people would rather hear an honest no than a dishonest yes. Fourth, I had more energy. When I'm really overscheduled, I don't feel buzzed and energetic; I feel tired. And my final and most surprising revelation about saying no more often: no one noticed! ●

PART III: LAST

Connect

How do you find true supporters and attract the interest of key decision makers who will help to fast-track your leadership ascent? And how do you build an authentic and valuable professional network overall?

Find a mentor with extensive leadership experience — and the desire to share it. A mentor can help you think through decisions, better understand complex people management issues and anticipate leadership challenges. The best mentors are forthcoming with advice, open to tough questions, honest with feedback and genuinely supportive of your success.

Co-mentoring, or reverse mentoring, is a two-way street. Young people have their own wisdom that is valuable for older colleagues.

Befriend someone who will really understand the day-to-day experiences and challenges you're facing. If you don't have a professional network of peers, then industry associations, networking events and conferences can be good places to meet them.

Networking in the 21st Century

Keep building contacts. You have countless methods to leverage in your relationship building. The most successful 21st-century networkers use all the tools — online and offline — available:

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Leave. Your. Desk. It is way too easy to spend your entire life in front of a screen. You'll increase your relationship building success exponentially if you actually go places.

Pick. Up. The. Phone. When you have some sort of misunderstanding, pick up the phone.

Build relationships before you need them. You have to continuously build this foundation so that people will be there for you when you want to reach out.

Give first. Even little "gives" make a big difference: advice, compliments, referrals, ideas.

Ask, too. It's part of good relationship building to ask for assistance when you need it.

Always take the meeting. If you're not necessarily interested in the opportunity but the person may be a good connection, go for it.

Diversify. Build relationships with people from other industries, countries, ethnicities, generations, regions and political views.

Network up. Determine the key players in your field, organization or department, and invite them to have a phone chat or join you for a cup of coffee. It's far more common than you think.

Take notes. It helps you retain information better and shows other people that you value their thoughts and ideas.

Follow up faster. Provide someone with follow-up information after a call or meeting within 24 hours.

Know that "thank you" is a form of networking. It is never bothering someone to gratefully thank them for their time, advice, help or anything else.

Do your homework. Before reaching out to or meeting with anyone, always Google the person and review his or her social media profiles.

Follow organizations. If there's a company you are interested in in any way, follow them and subscribe to them.

Give people and organizations reasons to reach out to you. Sharing status updates is a golden opportunity to heighten awareness of you and to spark interest in your leadership brand.

Customize everything. Many social networks provide generic outreach messages. Erase the generic sentence, and write your own words. Show that you are human.

Finally, you have the unique opportunity to give back to people younger or less experienced than you are. Do it. You'll not only help the other person, you'll also see how enjoyable it is to be the one providing the mentorship. ●

Grow

When leaders, particularly new ones, become overwhelmed, they tend to lose sight of their own career and personal development. In our fast-changing times, you need to continually focus on your own development as well. Millennials are perfectly suited for this. Here are some expert strategies for evolving over time:

Trust the foundation of your leadership training and the experience you build every day. As the world changes around you, never forget the basics. Of course, you'll have to work hard to stay current. Build relationships with smart, interesting people in your field who are younger and hipper than you are.

There are times it will pay to be brash as a leader. There are infinitely more times it will pay to be modest. Do not feel the need to grow your head along with your career.

At a certain point as you are rising in your success, you need to *decide* to be the best. You can't just wait and hope you rise to the top. Take time to craft ideas into a pitch, and share them with your team or higher-ups. Keep pitching those big ideas now and forever.

Don't be afraid to take a detour, make a lateral move, start a business on the side, or break out of what appear to be the prescribed rules of career development.

You're going to make mistakes and fail sometimes. So do your best to fall with style. Leaders take responsibility not just for wins but for losses. Leaders can and should apologize for important mistakes and still retain credibility. Life is long and will be filled with many more mistakes to come. We can't avoid them, but we can get better at handling them.

Not every millennial is succeeding today, and not every millennial will (or wants to) change the world. But as a generation, the millennials have the diversity, talent and skills to do so. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Becoming the Boss*, you'll also like:

1. ***The 2020 Workplace* by Jeanne C. Meister, Karie Willyerd.** The multi-generations that will make up the workforce in 2020 will place new demands on employers. Meister and Willyerd present a guide to help.
2. ***Leadership 2030* by Georg Vielmetter, Yvonne Sell.** The authors present six converging megatrends that will reshape businesses by 2030, including demographic change, and explain the transformative effects.
3. ***Finding the Next Steve Jobs* by Nolan Bushnell, Gene Stone.** Bushnell explains how to find, hire and nurture the people who could turn your company into the next Atari or the next Apple.