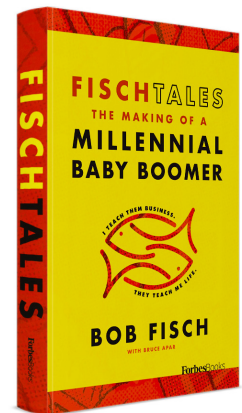


Fisch Tales

The Making of a Millennial Baby Boomer

by **Bob Fisch**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

After discovering data showing 76 million babies were born in the US between 1946 and 1964, a researcher gave the generation a name--Baby Boomer. And following were Gen X, Millennial, Gen Y, and Z. It doesn't matter what generation you belong to. What matters is how we get along, so we can stay strong and move along.

In *Fisch Tales*, Bob Fisch shares motivational lessons learned from his years in retail, notably as CEO of Rue21. Millennial Baby Boomer captures the idea of staying ageless. An MBB is a bit of a chameleon, someone with a survival instinct. Each of us is a one-of-a-kind creation who never stops being a work in progress. If you're not always moving forward, you stop growing.

That is part of what being a Millennial Baby Boomer is about: shared values that can, and should, connect generations more closely and more productively. If separate generations can learn to empathize more openly with other generations, their shared values have a chance to benefit everybody.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Lessons for passing on what you have learned.
- The role of good listening to influence others.
- The necessity of measured risk-taking for success.
- To help new leaders own their vision and their future.

Introduction

Vision is vital. If you have a vision to build something, it won't happen unless you can get people to go along to see and execute your vision. If it sounds simple, it's anything but. It takes constant pushing in motivating people. People want to feel they belong. You need to create a culture that supports your business vision. Fisch's lessons for leaders guide the way.

People

Whether hiring or aligning, value authenticity, dedication, curiosity, and tribal knowledge. Tribal knowledge is based on authentic wisdom that accumulates over time, from experience. It requires a strong work ethic. It feeds on reliable information and intangibles. It's organic, as in hard-won knowledge; it's not synthetic, as in assumed or imagined expertise.

Get a Mentor

One way for millennials, or someone of any age, to achieve their goal is to seek the guidance of a mentor. Learning the ropes from the right person is a proven way to increase your value to your employer. It's like being an apprentice. Even if you are not totally new at your job, there's always something to learn from more seasoned people willing to share their professional knowledge and street smarts. It is one of the best ways to move past colleagues who may be competing with you to land a coveted position.

If you don't make a focused effort to find a mentor, the alternative is to hope that maybe someone will take you under his or her wing. Wrong! "Hoping" gets you nowhere fast. "Maybe" doesn't cut it. Don't wait to seek help from those ahead of you in the journey.

Persona Versus Personality

It takes all kinds of personalities to make a company succeed. No manager should try to change someone's personality to fit in with others. If the person is skilled enough to keep on board, but challenging to work with, that's a behavioral issue that you try to work out. Someone's persona, however, is a different story. A persona can be developed to help someone communicate and relate better with colleagues. A persona is not always a precise mirror of personality; a persona may, in fact, mask it. Work closely with people to help them solidify a persona. Push them to do things they don't think they can do.

It's essential to be aware of how people perceive you. It's perfectly OK to have a personality that is shy or soft-spo-

ken. What's not OK is to let it hold you back from speaking up for yourself, for your ideas, and your accomplishments.

Culture

Culture describes how a company's attitude and behavior are demonstrated in day-to-day business dealings. Relationships are a vital part of culture.

Could You Care Less. . . Or More?

Caring genuinely about people is a desirable core value, but caring is only half of it. The other half is not hiding it. Show them that you care. It's therapeutic. For those not in a leadership role, show your boss that you care about more than a paycheck. Demonstrate clearly that you have a personal stake in the performance of the whole company by asking questions, offering to help with tasks not in your job description, or volunteering to help a coworker. The simple act of offering assistance sets you apart from your peers.

Praise people who deserve it. By making everybody believe they are critical to the company's success, a manager helps others reach their goals. Some believe millennials are especially sensitive to being recognized for their efforts. But that's a legitimate expectation by people of all ages. It's never a bad idea to show people working for you some love. That doesn't always involve a monetary reward or a title change. An achievement award goes a long way too. Meeting associates halfway in recognizing a job well done is an excellent way to encourage their positive attitude and amp up their output at the same time.

Think Like a Bezos

Whether you're in charge of a company, a division, or a project team, the most important thing to remember is this—there is no secret sauce for success! People at the top of their game, such as Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, tell us it is not genius that creates game-changing projects, products, and business models. It is good, old-fashioned sweat and the iron will to do whatever it takes to put your vision into action.

Bezos invested countless hours in years of relentless experimentation and unbridled imagination to create Amazon. The company he built continues to take risks in pursuit of profitable new ideas because Bezos knows that as hard as it is to get to the top, it's even harder to stay there. If you only do things where you know the answer in advance," Bezos says, "your company goes away." He adds, "It's the lessons you learned along the way."

Alignment

All team members must be on the same page, pulling in the same direction, carrying their weight. The key to alignment is communication.

Speak Plainly and Directly

No matter who you are communicating with, whether it's a subordinate or a boss, speak plainly and directly. Walk around every day to interact with as many people as possible. Keep the lines of communication open. You can't give direction once, walk away, and think your expectations magically will be met to your satisfaction. It requires repeated back and forth, always digging deeper to work it out. You set goals, delegate authority to achieve them, and monitor progress. That's the way to succeed in business.

Learn to Listen Critically

Listen analytically to make better decisions. There will be differences of opinion. Being selective in how you listen and who you listen to is critical. Listening to the wrong advice or misinformation can turn dangerous. It takes some practice to learn to detect that the people talking maybe don't know what they're talking about, or have a hidden agenda that is at cross purposes with your best interests.

How to Weaponize Listening

You can weaponize listening. Let's say you were dealing with people inside your own company. Make a point of using your listening powers to move the company ahead. One time, a CEO stunned a senior executive. He asked him about his wife and kids—by name. The executive couldn't believe the big boss would remember the names of one person's family members in a company of thousands. The CEO's secret was writing down such details after first meeting someone. The concern for each individual creates a powerful personal connection. He was an empathetic listener. Being a good leader is more than crunching numbers.

Risks and Diversification

Playing it safe may keep you securely in place, but also will get you nowhere fast. The road to success is paved with risks worth taking. Trends and markets are in constant flux, so reinvention and innovation must be constant.

Dig Beneath the Data

Accumulate as much information as possible to guide your

decisions. Understand how things work in every corner of the company. A smart manager immerses herself in the collective tribal knowledge of the entire company. Information is more than data. It includes intangibles that don't show up in hard numbers. Know which intangibles create success.

To get that hidden information, you have to read between the lines. Don't let data be your only guide to making the best decisions. There is always more to the story that you need to know.

Prepare, Don't Panic

Take advantage of your experience to guide your decision-making process. Bring your tribal knowledge into play. Whatever you do, do not panic! Yes, the world changes, but it usually returns to its previous position. Much about the business world marketplace is cyclical. Position yourself to be in a position of strength when a course correction restores normalcy to your business. Success belongs to those who dig in their heels and trust their instincts.

Speed to Market

A good rule for time management: move toward your goal as quickly as you can without being deterred.

It's Disruptors Against the World

Being a disruptor means being an innovator, the proverbial mover and shaker. Disruptors blaze new trails by going against the flow. By definition, then, they are in the minority. Everybody else falls into one of two camps. There are the interrupters. They get in the way of the disruptors for one reason or another. Or it may be competitive, with both vying to move up the corporate ladder when only one position is open. Or the interrupter may be a contrarian with a stubborn streak. But the disruptors and the interrupters are activists.

The other, and most common, type of person in this scenario is the passive bystander. Rather than rock the boat, bystanders are content to hang back, watch the disruptors and interrupters duke it out, and then go with the flow riding the coattails of whoever prevails. They're the opposite of risk-takers. In short, the disruptor acts, the interrupter reacts, the bystander spectates.

Hit 'Em Where They Ain't

There once was a New York Yankees Major League Baseball player who explained his success at the plate with the quirky remark that he hit him where they ain't. What he

meant was that the way for a batter to reach base safely is to hit the ball anywhere in the field except where there is someone in a position to catch it for the out. It's the same for success in business.

Confidence

Confidence in yourself and your business allows a strength of focus that refuses to allow the doubts and criticisms of others to weaken your resolve.

You Can Go Your Own Way, Or . . .

People who possess tribal knowledge don't try to dazzle with fancy footwork. They move with focus and with purpose in a straight line. They deliver results reliably by doing whatever it takes. It's hard to do that alone, though.

A mentor can't create instincts but can help refine them. Sometimes, it means holding the person's feet to the fire, pushing him or her hard toward the goal line. Whether you are the mentor or the one being mentored, the key is to harness the passion and instincts already there to help both the employee and the company.

Capturing Confidence

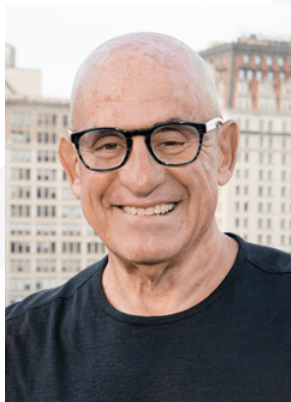
You need to overcome doubts to sell yourself . . . to you. Confidence comes from two places: your head and your heart. Sometimes they don't see eye-to-eye. In your heart, you may feel an intense passion that you have what it takes to get the job done. Your confidence fills you up with energy. Then after a couple of missteps or disappointments, your head starts playing tricks on you. You begin to doubt yourself. Stop! Trust the confidence you began with.

Confidence means focusing on what is important and ignoring unimportant nonsense that doesn't move you closer to your goal. Confidence means not letting the criticisms or doubts of others undermine your strength of purpose. Car pioneer Henry Ford put it this way, "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't. . . you're right."

Don't Doubt Yourself Just Because Others Might

Baker Mayfield virtually willed himself to be a superstar athlete. As a football quarterback in high school, he wasn't recruited by big-name colleges. One reason was his height: Six foot one isn't that big among today's towering quarterbacks. "No problem," thought Mayfield. Without being invited, the Texas native walked on the field to try out for Texas Tech. He not only made the squad; He became the first freshman to start a season-opening game for a major college football team. What motivates Baker Mayfield? He says, "I hate losing more than I love winning."

Life is like a puzzle. When all the pieces come together, you can see the big picture. Each one of the pieces shapes the journey. You determine when the puzzle is complete—more pieces can and will fall into place. Whether Millennial, Baby Boomer, or both, The Best Is Yet to Come!



An innovator in specialty apparel retailing, Bob Fisch orchestrated one of the most dramatic turn-arounds in recent retail history. As Founder and CEO, he led rue21 from Chapter 11 to the largest specialty apparel retail chain in store count with over 1200 stores. Always eager to raise the bar through new challenges and opportunities, his varied roles currently include author, mentor, investor, consultant, and motivational speaker. "I push people to take charge of their own destiny," he says, "so they have no regrets and can enjoy life to the fullest. It worked for me."

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