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# **Mark Zuckerberg's Leadership Style: Showing the Worst of Generation Y?**

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Since I wrote my very first post here back in summer 2008, I've been an ardent defender of Generation Y whenever I hear of the media painting them with a broad brush using terms like *greedy*, *arrogant*, and *entitled*.

I've tried to do this, while sticking to this blog's focus on employee leadership development and creating a workplace culture of ownership, by highlighting Gen Y business leaders that buck the above, media-friendly attributes, in both their leadership style and in the employees they recruit and develop. Two of these are Jason Fried of 37signals and our Best Boss, Nick Thomley of Pinnacle Services.

But is another, much more well known Gen Y business leader – Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg – setting things back for his peers? I'll share with you three exhibits culled from recent news on Zuckerberg and Facebook, and let you be the judge (and offer your opinion, if you wish, by commenting below):

- **Exhibit A - Greed:** This week on CNET, Caroline McCarthy lists 10 incidents in Facebook's brief history that she describes as their "follies." Perhaps most controversial are the claims by founders of Harvard University's ConnectU social networking project – a precursor to Facebook – that Zuckerberg joined them as a programmer of the project, then "stole their code and intellectual property" for his own gain on what would become Facebook. There may be validity to this claim, as Facebook settled in court with ConnectU in 2008.
- **Exhibit B - Arrogance:** Also this week, instant messages surfaced purported to be from Zuckerberg circa 2004, shortly after he launched Facebook from his Harvard dorm room. You can read the purported IM transcript [here](#); they reveal a profane disdain for users of his then-very-small social networking platform. Some claim Zuckerberg's attitude toward his "customers" at that time still manifests in the company's changing and complex approach to handling user privacy today, which brings me to...
- **Exhibit C - Entitlement:** As this visualization shows, Facebook has indeed been intentional about updating its user privacy controls often since its founding in 2004. This has led industry observers like Jeff Jarvis to advise that "If Facebook were smart... It would not change its privacy settings and policies constantly. Set it. Explain it. Stick with it." These frequent changes, many of which have been implemented and announced with no warning, have led some experts to conclude that Zuckerberg and company have and continue to operate with general disregard for their constituents. In other words, with a sense of *entitlement*.

One trend I find revealing is that as Facebook makes the information it gathers from users more public by default (users still retain the option to make it private), more of them are reacting by seeking [Cheap Cialis](#) out guidance on deleting their accounts, as evidenced by this Google Trends search for "delete your facebook." In an e-newsletter I received today from WebProNews, one industry expert thought this wouldn't make much of a dent in the size of Facebook's user base. Still, it could turn away folks who would otherwise be around as a target audience for Facebook's increased efforts around ad sales and other, user-based sources of revenue.

Yesterday the company held an unprecedented all-hands meeting to discuss the controversy over its recent privacy changes. I hope that Winning Workplaces-approved employee engagement practices factor into this and any future meetings on the subject, for the good of both Facebook and its employees, and the millions of users of the platform.

**What are your thoughts?**

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