



Leaving A Business Legacy... Day One

by William (Bill) Shackelford: May 8, 2013

When leaders are promoted to lead a new group generally their first focus is on increasing profits, raising stock price and growing revenue. Their goal often is to prove they are a better leader by doing more in these areas than their predecessor. To do this, they often push employees harder than they have been pushed before to do whatever it takes to achieve the goal.

However, as they leave for their next promotion, their focus shifts to thoughts of legacy. “What did I accomplish? What am I leaving behind?”

Steve Krupp in a Harvard Business Review blog talked about a leader’s legacy as something that *“transcends them and cements their contribution to the growth and transformation of their organization”*. If this is true then, one other thing is also true... you cannot be the messenger for your legacy.

Michael Jordan – one of the greatest basketball players of our time – left a legacy because people who played with him or saw him play still talk fondly about him today. You want to leave a legacy? Make sure your employees have good things to say about you today and in the future. Leave them talking about the one or two GREAT things you did for them.

Legacy Focus is Growing

Where in the past leaders could expect to be promoted if they were successful in producing revenue. More and more companies are including employee morale/satisfaction into the promotion process. It’s not the primary consideration yet but, when there are two equally qualified candidates, it can be the deciding factor.

Turning Legacy Thinking Into Legacy Planning

Leaders should start day one thinking about their legacy and the ONE GREAT THING they will leave behind. Here are 4 steps you can take to create your legacy.

Step 1: Conduct A Cultural Audit

One of the first things you should do when you take over your new group is to begin planning a cultural audit. Properly done, it will provide you a snapshot of your organization and identify areas of great need for change. Use an audit process designed as a pre and post assessment to allow you to measure changes in the organization on an absolute scale.

Step 2: Identify One or More Areas of Focus

Use the results of the cultural audit to identify the ONE GREAT THING you can do for employees that they will see as a lasting, positive legacy.



Step 3: Work with Employees to Identify Solutions to Identified Issues

It is critical to engage employees in the selection of the issue or issues to be addressed and the actions to be taken to address the issue(s). This must be a grassroots effort to be successful in legacy building. Keep in mind that if the effort improves morale, job satisfaction, teamwork, respect, trust, etc., it will also improve productivity, customer satisfaction and revenue – all of the things you originally set out to do.

Step 4: Conduct A Post Assessment Before You Leave

If you initially used a pre/post assessment process, the post assessment will be a repeat of the original assessment – using the same assessment instruments and process. From the post assessment you will be able to **quantify the impact of your leadership** on the team and, especially, on the critical issue(s) you focused on as a group. Just like with Michael Jordan, employees will be able to talk about your “statistics”... “Took employee morale from less than 50% to over 90%”, “Doubled job satisfaction”, “Produced a three-fold increase in trust”. These hard facts repeated over and over again will become your legacy.

What do you think?

Is leaving a positive legacy important to you? Do you see more organizations including employee satisfaction when promoting leaders? Does a focus on legacy give too much power to employees? I would like to know what you think.