

# Start creating your legacy now by developing your people

By Wendy Axelrod March 9th, 2016

Working for a global finance company this year, I have been asked to support a variety of leaders in shaping their leadership-development goals. These goals were to be based upon significant assessment feedback data on their management behaviors, as well as the leaders' aspirations. As it turns out, two of these leaders had careers that were winding down, and they were stumped about defining personal development goals. Through conversation, each arrived at their desire to leave their teams in great shape, to prosper without them. Being so focused on hitting their numbers, neither leader had thought much about this previously. When I asked how they supported the development of their people, one told me, "Because I have a seasoned team, I do very little. Though, last year I took on a new professional and it's been very enjoyable to develop him. I look forward to our weekly check-ins and watching him grow. But, I never thought about doing this for my veteran staff; they were already competent at what they do."

Too bad for this leader that he is just now considering developing *all* of his people. For experienced managers, it is never too early to start building your legacy.

For all the possible ways we can leave our mark, the most significant has to do with the imprint we leave on others when we raise their abilities and contributions, and increase their confidence and own self worth. Ram Charam and Bill Conaty in their book "**The Talent Masters: Why Smart Leaders Put People Before Numbers,**" tell us the best of the CEO's believe: "Only one competency lasts. It is the ability to create a steady, self-renewing stream of leaders. Money is just a commodity. Talent supplies the edge."

Deliberately growing people to succeed you, or to develop in other ways, will create a transformation both in the way you manage and in the results your people will achieve. The steps you take and how you approach it lead to this transformation's lasting power.

Consider these actions:

1. **Decisively communicate to your people your hope and expectation for their growth.** Create a strong, open and honest connection with each one so that they trust you, are inspired by you and are willing to try new actions because you have their back.
2. **Trade time from doing your regular duties for delegating your work that will be developmental for others.** Entrust them with meaningful added responsibilities that come with supports. Steel yourself for the risk-reward trade-offs: perhaps a downward slide of results initially, yet ongoing increased capacity of your staff in short order.
3. **Help your people think differently, gaining a broader and longer-term outlook with the work they do.** As a simple example, when speaking with honors students in the

business school recently, they considered how to expand the role of baristas from their local cafe. Baristas can be true advocates for their store, build relationships for repeat customers and develop new ways to provide the best value for both the customer and their business. Taking on their role in that way will require they develop many more skills than brewing a great cup of joe.

4. **Serve as their role model for self-awareness, trying new approaches and quality standards.** Most people do not want to take the lead from someone who cuts corners or is unaware of their impact on others. Nor is creating legacy about telling them how to do things. It's about fueling their confidence to test new behaviors, make sound choices and self-monitor their impact.

5. **Follow through with each employee regularly.** Provide many big and small touches throughout the week: habitually ask thought-provoking questions to help them think their way into new territory, provide bigger assignments and be honest with feedback. Ask about and then listen to what they are learning and applying. Be their advocate for larger roles that require them to step up.

So, does your day-to-day management of people include building your legacy? Consider what many managers seem to miss about developing people in significant ways. Do it now, and enjoy the satisfaction of watching them grow while your department produces even more impressive results.

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