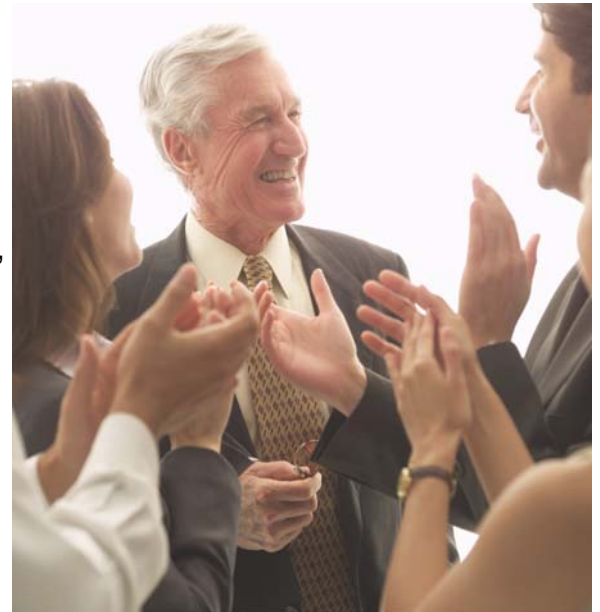


# THE LEGACY OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT - How Will You BE REMEMBERED?

By Tracy M. McIlrath

History books are filled with examples of amazing people who bequeathed us a legacy of amazing feats, amazing accomplishments and amazing examples. Lincoln left us with the Emancipation Proclamation. Margaret Mead reminded us "...a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world." Mother Teresa's vision of the Missionaries of Charity is still active across the planet, and JFK's words still ring in our ears, "Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country." Most of us would find it pretty overwhelming to attempt to fill any of these shoes, but we do leave our own legacy in our own way – no matter the hubris or humility.

**Of the approximately 100,000 hours you invest into a 40 or 50-year career, have you made daily life better for anyone?** Are you just doing time, not rocking the boat or leaving an impact either way? Are you focused only on "your own best interests" and remain unaware of the impacts on others? If a biographer sat down and wrote about you today, what would they say?



## **Building a legacy**

Building a legacy to be proud of doesn't require a particular job title, income bracket, zip code or political affiliation. It does however require something exceptional – honest self-reflection and taking personal responsibility. Now don't panic! You don't have to change the Constitution, find a cure for cancer or replant the rainforests by yourself! Privately examining your attitudes and motivations is a significant start.

## **Are You Aware Of...**

**A simple first step is expanding your awareness of the impact of your words and actions.** Do you use common courtesy (please, thank you, remembering people's names)? Do you hold the door for your employees or do you expect them to hold it for you? When you ask someone how he or she is doing, do you listen to his or her answer? – Do you care? If not, what does that say? Are you *really* too busy to care about the person standing next to you in the elevator? Do you feel employees owe you their respect? What have you done to earn it? Do you respect them? Do you reflect this attitude in your behavior?

## **Old Dogs Can Learn New Tricks**

An old saying claims, **“There is more than one way to skin a cat.”** (I apologize to PETA members everywhere!) Believe it or not, no matter how long you have been in this firm or how recently you received your MBA, there are other ways of conducting business besides the one you default to.

Receptiveness to exploring options demonstrates flexibility on your part, as well as trust in the professionals you work with. There are a myriad of ways to accomplish the same ends in business. The most significant difference is in the way your team feels at the end of the day or the end of the project. Leveraging the experience and perspective of others is smart strategically in both a due diligence and morale perspective. Finding new ways to improve communication, build rapport, show appreciation, etc., provide competitive advantages no single person's dictation can match. Finding ways that engage and empower your entire staff make you savvy and wise – not bad accolades for an epitaph!

### **Building Legacy Through Mentoring**

**Another positive legacy builder is mentoring.** This doesn't have to be dry or boring. Perhaps you could take the new sales guy to lunch and pick his brain about what challenges he is running into in Chicago. Or maybe sit in for an hour in the next new employee training session to answer questions of the fresh, new faces. Find out from HR who is pursuing a degree, and then have a chat with them about practical applications within the firm. There is still a person behind the executive suit – share your experiences, frustrations and lessons with others who will be here after you are gone. You have much more to offer your employees than just canned glib at the holidays or closed door at the end of the hall.

## **Our Every-day Legacies**

We each craft our legacies every day – our statement of what was important to us, what we valued, what we worked toward. We can earn respect by demonstrating awareness and integration of our experience, integrity and humanity to those around us. Or we can be aloof, disassociated and rigid in our direction and interaction. When we leave a position or leave a career, tallies are counted. We either made life better for those around us or we didn't. We set success and sustainability in motion, or we didn't. We nurtured another in their development, or we didn't. We cast our lot with each word and each action. **What does your legacy inspire?**

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