

# What Will Be Your Leadership Legacy?

BY LYNDA McDERMOTT

Roy Makowsky's memorial service was held recently. He was a businessman and a boater. He was also remembered as a devoted husband, loving father, and loyal friend. I didn't know Roy other than to see him with his dogs walking the docks at our yacht club. What I learned that day and now will remember the most about Roy was the hope and optimism he had for the underprivileged kids in Bridgeport, Connecticut, where he did much volunteer work. He donated hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars to provide them with computers and books. But more important, the legacy Roy left with these children was symbolized by the small gold key he gave out to every child he touched to remind them that success was just one unlocked door ahead of them.

**WHAT IS A LEADERSHIP LEGACY?** A legacy is defined as something handed down from ancestor or predecessor.

A leadership legacy is the knowledge, stories, experiences, and lessons passed on to others by someone in a position of authority or power. It is a memorable impact that is embedded into the lives of others.

Legacies don't just happen, you create them—consciously or unconsciously. Typically, when a reelected U.S. president hits his second term, the media starts asking rhetorically: "So, Mr. President, what do you think your legacy will be?" Whether you're a president, a CEO or an individual professional, if you've waited until the end of your "term" or when you're nearly retired to contemplate what you want your legacy to be...it's too late!

**LIVE YOUR LEADERSHIP LEGACY TODAY** You won't be able to leave the legacy you aspire to be remembered for in the future, unless you start living it today. David Epstein,

CEO of Novartis Oncology, acknowledged that at one time he might have only been remembered for his intense focus on record growth for the multibillion dollar global unit he governs. Today, he proudly also claims to have learned to become "much more human."

In fact, thinking about your leadership legacy today, can make you an even better leader in the future. You can begin to shape a vision of the type of leader you want to be in the future by asking such questions as:

- What are the ways in which I want people to remember me?
- What impact do I want to make on this team, on this company, on my clients?
- What type of culture do I want to create?
- As a leader, am I developing other leaders?

What is *your* leadership "brand" today that could become your legacy tomorrow? Your leadership brand is an image that reflects your uniqueness in the eyes of others. Besides self-reflection, leaders can ask their "followers": What have been my greatest and best contributions? What have you learned from me? This goes well beyond just receiving a leadership 360° feedback report that describes your leadership style.

Is there a consistency between the legacy you aspire to and the leader you are today? If there is a gap, what strategies or actions do you want to take in order to bridge any leadership legacy gap?

**LEADERSHIP BRAND** Andy Johnson, chairman of The Diamond Cellar, recognizes that he must begin to make some changes to his leadership brand. The luxury retail jewelry company was founded by his father in 1946 in an office basement in Columbus, Ohio. Today, Andy is in the process of building a \$50 million business with not only two multilevel stores in Columbus, Ohio, but locations in Pittsburgh and Tulsa, with more to come. He must not only preserve his family-oriented style, but as his company grows he must increasingly become a leader capable of letting others lead.

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This leadership legacy question can also be asked of your team. A Pfizer product team whose product comes off patent in 2008 recently did a Leadership Legacy exercise by asking the question: "What do we want our team be known for?" Some of the group's answers were:

- We extended the survival of our patients.
- We worked with KOLs/Oncologists in a committed partnership to help our patients.
- We established the role of nurses in oncology and leveraged their role.
- We provided a flagship model for a customer-centered approach to oncology.

One of the team members who had recently returned from working in Malawi suggested that the team raise \$1,000 to build a well in one of the country's small villages because of its need for fresh water. The team raised \$5,000 in three months and will be able to fund five wells! The team leader said with pride: "A year ago who would have thought that this also would be a part of our team's legacy!"

**"LIVE LIKE YOU WERE DYING"** Tim McGraw, one of country music's top artists, won a Grammy for his song "Live Like You Were Dying." One of the lyrics is "Took a good hard look at

what I'd do if I could do it again". You've got the chance today to look at how you're leading and decide if you would lead the same way again.

Do you have any regrets about leadership paths you might have taken, but didn't? No matter where you are on your leadership journey, you can make some different choices. Are you just following a career path or are you pursuing a "calling"? Are you on the wrong leadership path and do you need to make a "right turn"?

It won't necessarily be easy to identify the changes you need to make to become the leader you want to be. Just know that your day-to-day actions are molding your eventual measure of success as a leader. So you need to be asking yourself every day, not just what it takes to get *ahead* but, more importantly, what it means to *contribute* and leave something lasting behind. *MW*

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