

Beyond Engagement

How a New Legacy Mindset Changes Everything

By David A. O'Brien, WorkChoice Solutions



I've been having the leadership legacy conversation with my coaching clients for years. In most cases, these conversations take the form of an exploration of what the leader wants to be known for and of course, what they want to leave behind after they've moved on for one reason or another.

Although this process continues to provide significant value for most leaders I work with, I've come to believe that the concept of legacy goes well beyond the realm of leadership. Webster dictionary defines legacy as, "anything handed down from the past, as from an ancestor or predecessor." For many, leaving a legacy is associated with the end of one's career and how their contribution has left things better off for the organization and its stakeholders. While this is important, today's intensely competitive and complex work environment demands a broader view.

With few exceptions, leaders at all levels are keenly aware of how employee engagement drives organizational success. As a result, vast sums of money and other resources are routinely invested in trying to move the engagement needle forward. Despite many well-intentioned efforts toward this end, much of the available data continues to illustrate significant gaps in employee engagement across industries. Struck by this reality, (which has trended in this direction for several years) I have explored the legacy link to engagement within my wide circle of clients and colleagues. What has resulted from these numerous conversations is not only a new view of legacy,

but perhaps more importantly, a leadership framework for moving well beyond engagement as we know it today.

As a beginning point, legacy is not bound by time, age, or the stage in a person's career. It's also not limited to a particular level of hierarchy in an organization. Rather, it's the sum of our efforts and commitment (regardless of role) toward improving our workplace and leaving things better off each day. By my estimation, this is the breakthrough thinking that can and should allow leaders and teams to harness a legacy mindset to take engagement to a new level.

Central to this new legacy mindset is the belief that every employee has the capacity to leave things better off each and every day. To achieve its full benefit, this belief must be shared by everyone, not just by you and your leadership peers.

Consider for a moment how things would be different for you as a leader if your team had this level of clarity and purpose. Imagine how your employee engagement numbers would shift. More than likely, the positive shift would fuel an even higher level of job satisfaction too. To be sure, leading your team to embrace this new legacy mindset may be one of the most demanding endeavors of your leadership journey. It might help to remember that your capacity to develop your team to this level of clarity and purpose may very well be what defines your leadership legacy.

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7 Things You Can Do Now to Build A New Legacy Mindset

1. Invest the time to assess your level of leadership clarity including your core values and beliefs and how they guide your leadership actions and behaviors. Consider how they influence team trust, clarity of expectations and decision making. Also consider how well you role-model the behaviors you expect from your team.
2. Initiate a conversation with your leadership peer group about their view of leadership legacy and explore how the new legacy mindset can impact employee engagement and job satisfaction. Also define a set of leadership behaviors that reinforce the new legacy mindset. Solicit input from your HR partners to help refine your leadership strategy relative to both scenarios.
3. Seek feedback from your team about their definition of leadership legacy and then explore how the new legacy mindset definition can be linked to their definition. Also encourage them to develop a list of team behaviors that support and inhibit the new legacy mindset and its impact on team success.
4. Assess the frequency and content of your leadership communications and consider what impact they have on creating a legacy mindset among your team. Be sure to provide positive feedback and reinforcement in real time as appropriate.
5. Consider doing a monthly “round-up” or summary of team successes that serve to remind everyone of how the new legacy mindset is having a positive impact on organizational performance.
6. Link each person’s role and contribution to the key goals of the organization. The more employees understand how their efforts impact the greater good of the group, the more likely they are to help foster a new legacy mindset.
7. Look for opportunities to reinforce your leadership legacy vision of the future and how it creates an improved state of well-being for all stakeholders.

About David A. O’Brien:

David is President of CT based WorkChoice Solutions, a trusted provider of leadership and team effectiveness coaching, training, and consulting services that was founded in 2000. He works with a wide range of corporate and nonprofit clients to help bring about sustainable improvements in organizational effectiveness. He is also an in-demand keynote speaker on the topic of leadership excellence and employee engagement. His first book, *The Navigator’s Handbook, 101 Leadership Lessons for Work & Life* is available on-line and in bookstores nationwide. His second book, *The Navigator’s Compass, 101 Steps Toward Leadership Excellence* had a nationwide release in 2016 and is also available wherever books are sold. Additionally, his many articles have appeared in a variety of publications. To learn more, please visit [WorkChoice Solutions online](#) or contact him directly at 860.242.1070.

