

How to leave a legacy

What kind of leader do you want to be remembered as when you leave your current job? **Katherine Graham** believes defining legacy goes a long way to understanding the mark you'll leave on the organisation you work for.

Heritage is one of those intangible qualities – difficult to capture in words, but easy to recognise. It's the same when it comes to the legacy leaders leave behind when they resign or retire. Think of Nelson Mandela – the humility and desire for reconciliation that characterised his presidency. Or Steve Jobs, the innovator, or Jack Welch, the eradicator of inefficiency. On the negative side, consider Sepp Blatter who, despite his achievements at FIFA, will always be remembered for the massive corruption he left in his wake.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE LEGACY AND WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

Simply put, legacy is what you'll be remembered for when you leave an organisation. 'A legacy is not necessarily about the products and services you leave behind, but more about the people who will continue to carry on your vision after you've left,' says business coach Izak Strauss.

A legacy is a living testament of the body of work you've built up to date and your professional integrity, which is why it's crucial to always leave on good terms when you resign. 'Never burn bridges,' warns Jason Bernic of Old Mutual Wealth.

'People of the past will introduce you to people of the future, and one door will open another.'

WHAT KIND OF LEGACY DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE BEHIND?

This will depend on your value systems, and unique skills and talents. 'You should aim to leave a positive legacy, a legacy of person-guided values and achieving great company

results,' explains Frank Magwegwe of Momentum Retail. Anyone in an organisation can achieve this, he believes, not just those in management. However, Frank argues that it's difficult for CEOs of state and listed companies to develop a legacy if their tenure is too short.

An integral part of leaving a legacy is succession planning, something many business owners fail to do. 'If you think to yourself: "I built this business from scratch and no one can run it like I do," you'll never invest in people to manage the transition to new management,' asserts Izak. 'As a consequence, when you leave abruptly or pass away, everything will be in a shambles.'

A much better strategy is to groom leaders who'll carry your vision forward, ensuring the company doesn't fall apart in your absence. 'Ideally, you would want your organisation's good reputation to continue long after you've left,' adds Izak.

CELEBRATING LEGACY

Management would do well to make the most of the legacies left behind by exceptional leaders and employees. 'Companies should tap into an employee's legacy by maintaining contact with them since they are still highly regarded,' says Frank.

Jason believes it's important to celebrate the legacy left by former employees. 'When current employees see management remembering the positive contributions of their predecessors, rather than belittling

them, a wonderful staff spirit is fostered, which will continue to attract good people to the company.' ■

