

By Teri Traaen Ed. D.P.A.
August 2012

Dear Colleagues:

Legacy work is a key concept that we are working with our clients to fully embrace in order to raise the level of excellence within their individual organizations. Legacy work brings to the forefront the necessity for each member of a work team to approach their individual assignments as if it were the seminal work by which they will be both individually and collectively measured. This concept of raising the bar in terms of what both individual employees and work teams are creating as deliverables is such that a 'whole career' perspective is manifest at all times.

A key way to approach this concept is found in the following question: 'If this assignment were the one by which my entire career and contributions were to be measured, what level of excellence would I demonstrate not only throughout the project, but as the final deliverable(s)?' If an individual team member fully utilizes this concept so that each assignment he or she is responsible for serves as the backdrop for the rating of their entire professional production of work products a commitment to excellence is more clearly in place.

The intention of this approach is to assist all employees (and their greater organization) to value each individual smaller assignment for what it really represents, namely a measure of the potential for accomplishment by the person/team that is charged with delivering exemplary results. A mistake often made within all types of organizations is to accept 'effective' work - as opposed to setting a standard for exemplary work (or service). 'Effective work' is just what it reflects - good enough to get by --- not egregious enough in nature to cause problems - but clearly short of the very best that can be accomplished at all times.

Ask the following key questions within your organization's leadership ranks the next time assignments are being designed and then delegated:

1. Which employees are highly motivated to consistently demonstrate the highest levels of proactive creativity? How have they demonstrated that this is a consistent part of their employee profile?
2. How is your organization communicating that legacy work is the only acceptable standard for individual and team work products?
3. How is substandard (or only effective) work received by those in supervisory roles within your organization? [Is minimally acceptable work ever received and recognized as something of a higher caliber than what it really represents?]
4. How are examples of legacy work brought forward in your organization's mentoring and coaching activities for newer employees who have recently completing on boarding activities within your organization?
5. Has your organization embedded legacy work into its vision, mission and values statements? If not, why not?

If your organization does not currently and overtly embrace legacy work as a standard, is it because you fear the reaction to this level of expectations? Chances are this type of leadership change will only bring about positive outcomes for the long term. We encourage you to risk the change, and more importantly prepare for the extraordinary impact.