Your Culture, People, and Their Stories

How Personal Legacy Propels Enterprise Success

by Steven Green
"You can't build a reputation on what you're going to do," observed Henry Ford. Or, to put it another way, actions speak louder than words. In the world of enterprise, an employee’s personal legacy is the sum of their contributions, large and small, adding up to a tangible marker of value. The right social recognition program provides a platform to celebrate, share, and infuse the corporate intranet with these success stories. It delivers a record of an employee’s greatest hits to date. Why is this important? As this paper will show, encouraging personal legacy through social recognition has a powerful ripple effect, one that propels enterprise success.

Social Recognition: A Fundamental Need

According to psychologist Abraham Maslow, social recognition is one of the five fundamental human needs. Not a want, but a need – coming just after food, safety, and belonging in importance.1

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs was first introduced almost seventy years ago in his paper, A Theory of Human Motivation. He concluded that individuals are primarily motivated by needs in an ascending scale, illustrated by his iconic pyramid showing their ranked order.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs is shown above. The pyramid illustrates the five levels of human needs. The most basic are physiological and safety/security, shown at the base of the pyramid. As one moves to higher levels of the pyramid, the needs become more complex.
His theory had critics and supporters, however it was recently found to be on-target regarding the importance of social recognition as a motivator. In 2010 a team of psychologists revised Maslow’s work to incorporate the last fifty years of study in evolutionary biology, anthropology, and psychology. Some changes were made in his ranking of motivational factors, yet ‘esteem needs’ – which includes social recognition – remained as listed.² What does this mean for the enterprise? Social recognition is not just nice-to-have. It’s mission critical. In essence, Maslow’s theory is that esteem/appreciation/praise/respect is one of the fundamental motivational factors in striving for growth.³ When our work is recognized, greater effort is given. If esteem needs are not met then growth stagnates. Ensuring that social recognition is part of the day-to-day in your organization is therefore not a soft approach to management; it is the smart approach.

Notes:


Monetary rewards are not the answer to recognizing and encouraging success, and can actually undermine motivation. Extensive research backs this up.\(^4\) According to a study by the London School of Economics: "We find that financial incentives can result in a negative impact on overall performance."\(^5\) Gadgets, trips, or other monetary incentives don’t make a lasting impression, or benefit the organization as a whole. “Over-reliance on pay and promotion as motivators leads to an organizational culture that is very transactional and disengaged,” says Susan David, co-director of the Harvard/McLean Institute of Coaching.\(^6\) In contrast, the right social recognition program allows employees to define a personal legacy— their imprint within the organization. It tells the story of their ‘sum total of works’ as an employee, and facilitates growth and development. 

The synergy between personal legacy and enterprise success is clear. An organization’s most powerful resource is its people. An environment that encourages social recognition translates to higher productivity and employee retention rates. It builds the employee’s brand and strengthens the organization’s culture. In short, personal legacy propels enterprise success.

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Put Personal Legacy To Work

How do you get a motivated work force with low employee turnover and high productivity? How do you increase revenues? “I’ve been around a lot of companies [FedEx, the American Broadcasting Corporation, Kentucky Fried Chicken, American Airlines] and I’ve seen what makes them grow,” says Frank Maguire, founding member and former VP of FedEx Worldwide, and author of You’re the Greatest: How Validated Employees Can Impact Your Bottom-Line. “Those who thrive take care of themselves and their employees. It doesn’t happen by accident. The attitude of gratitude requires time, attention and cultivation.”

What it doesn’t require are ineffective monetary incentives. Fair compensation is important, but for today’s knowledge worker the most valuable currency is recognition. The kind of recognition that allows an employee to build a personal legacy within the organization. One that raises an employee’s profile, and results in greater day-to-day satisfaction and retention. Conversely, if working hard is hardly recognized how soon will it be until greener pastures beckon? Social recognition increases an employee’s visibility within an organization, shining a light on talent and encouraging success. This builds the employee’s brand – their personal legacy. It is the passport necessary to progress, with increased visibility clearing the way to further opportunities. Employees benefit. Your enterprise benefits. It’s win-win.

Notes:
Personal Legacy ROI

The ripple effect of personal legacy means that the stories collected and shared through the right social recognition program will:

- **Increase talent retention and productivity** – If you believe that your efforts matter you’ll be less likely to leave, and more likely to make greater contributions.

- **Reinforce culture** – Social recognition programs build institutional memory, serving as a repository of stories that would otherwise go untold. The act of publicly celebrating these stories helps to shape the culture of the company.

- **Improve talent spotting** – When your peers recognize your contributions your successes are seen by the entire company. The sender also benefits by visibly demonstrating managerial skills.

- **Foster collaboration** – Allowing praise and recognition to be shared out in the open creates a rich gallery of stories that can be searched and browsed by anyone.

- **Streamline recognition** – Social recognition removes the bottleneck experienced when already busy managers are the required starting point for all recognition.

- **Build community** – Recognition makes everyone more connected and productive, transforming recognition into a business resource for finding the people within the company who have the required skills.

- **Inspire and energize employees** – It doesn’t take much to say “thank you” for a job well done. Yet the impact of those two words can be astounding, changing the way employees feel about themselves and their work.

Social recognition is powerful. What Maslow knew in 1943, successful organizations know today. The right social recognition program allows employees to define their personal legacy through stories. The impact on your people and culture will have a profound affect on your organization, far greater than a more expensive rewards program.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the number one reason people leave their jobs is lack of appreciation.10

Fifty-four percent of organizations involuntarily lost high-performing employees during the first half of 2010, reports *T&D Magazine*.11

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About Steven Green

Steven Green is the founder of TemboSocial (formerly PollStream), a leading provider of interactive engagement and community building solutions. Steven built TemboSocial with the intention of helping global companies to engage their customers and employees in measurable and meaningful two-way dialogue. As a result he has become a valuable resource to key decision makers as they explore the growing field of online dialogue and social media. With an impressive roster of clients, such as The US Navy, TD Bank, eBay, and Best Buy, Steven continues to grow TemboSocial’s reputation as an innovator of online solutions designed to segment, engage and inform. He has a BA from McGill University in Montreal and a Social Work degree from York University in Toronto.

About TemboSocial

TemboSocial enables the social enterprise for some of the world’s most progressive organizations, such as TD Bank, Macy’s, Best Buy and the US Navy. Leading companies turn to TemboSocial’s hosted suite of tools to foster collaboration, conversation and recognition among employees, customers and prospects.

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