

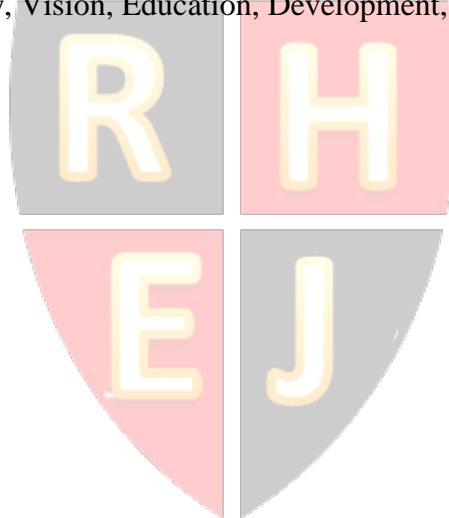
## Designing a Leadership Legacy (L2) framework

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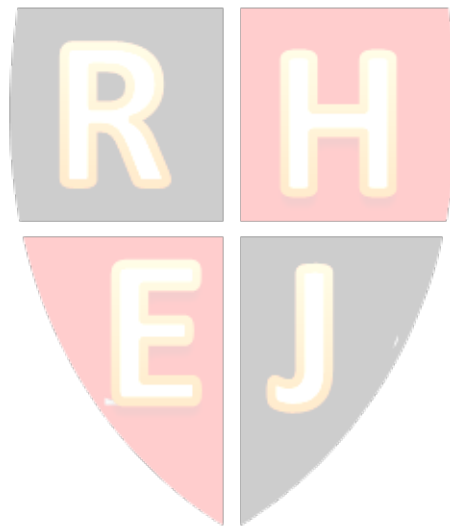
### Abstract

What does it mean to leave a "leadership legacy" in the organizations and communities in which we are involved? This mixed-methods research project will explore the stories of successful individuals who have left a leadership legacy. Specifically in this article, the preliminary research will share various components of a model to create a leadership legacy (L2). A leadership legacy (L2) is to leave behind the significance of our talents and our passions. The framework represented in this research includes areas such as vision, foundation, intentional focus, meaningful relationships, resiliency, and sustainability. Creating an L2 provides the opportunity for individuals and organizations to leave a meaningful impression in the world.

Keywords: Leadership, Legacy, Vision, Education, Development, Leadership Framework



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## INTRODUCTION

The long tale of human history includes stories and examples of individuals who broke the proverbial mold. These people saw possibilities that others simply couldn't imagine. Matched with an equally impressive ability to transform vision into reality, these leaders created positive, lasting, meaningful change for themselves and others around them. But what happens after such a person departs the organization he/she has transformed? Does the work continue? In some cases, the answer is a resounding yes! What separates these leaders from others, whose work simply fades away when they are no longer the driving force?

Research conducted by various theorists and thought-leaders over the past decade reveals a framework or collection of attributes possessed by individuals who are able to stimulate such a lasting legacy of positive change. These attributes have been collected into a framework called a leadership legacy ("L2"). This framework is currently being studied and applied in various environments (classrooms, board rooms, conferences, retreats, etc.). Research from this framework includes a series of in-depth interviews with specific individuals to uncover exactly how they are able to leave such legacy.

A leadership legacy (L2) is the imprint and significance of our talents and passions that exist long after we ourselves are gone. Kouzes and Posner (2006) explain, "We leave a legacy to others. They are our inheritors..." (pg. 91). The L2 that we leave behind is extremely personal and unique. Everyone can leave an L2 - it is not defined by our position within an organization or our financial status. It is the component of our lives that carry beyond our individual efforts.

Leaving an L2 does not have a time limit, nor is it intended to be an end of life reflection. Rather, having a distinct legacy early in our lives can help us determine the appropriate pathways to take on a daily, weekly, and annual basis. According to Birchfield (2012), "Legacies define leaders... good leaders start thinking about the legacy they prefer to leave early in their leadership tenure" (p. 24). A leader's legacy is what is left behind and the impact they have on an organization when they are no longer in a position (Kaye & Jacobson, 2012; Coleman, 1998; Reed, 2009).

Unlike the organizational mission and vision, a legacy is intended specifically to define or brand individual efforts within that organization that comprise what is left behind. Whether it is the CEO, managers, or employees, each individual has the potential to make a lasting influence. As Galford and Maruca (2006) explain, "legacy thinking is grounded in the individual... (and) guides the process by which vision, mission, and strategy are attempted" (p. 8).

Defining the key characteristics of leaders within organizations has many essential components. As Kouzes and Posner describe (2006), "It is our collective task to liberate the leader within ourselves and within every one of us" (p. 121). Being provided a model to help with that approach is a valuable guide to duplicate the success of others.

## L2 FRAMEWORK

A good place to begin is to define what L2 is, and what it is not. The definition of L2 is not for people within organizations only, although that can be one area where leaders will thrive. Rather, L2 can be defined as the impact we want to leave on areas we are most passionate about. The areas of passion can be considered family, community, organizations, or all of them. The model for the L2 isn't based on money left behind, although that could be a type of legacy; it's

about sustainability beyond our output. The L2 created can live on within the organization(s) or the lives of others it has affected. The review of literature formulated interview questions to ask the subjects specifically about their own L2. Through the literature review the components that emerged are those listed below. Further explanations of these terms are described through specific data examples by the researcher in subsequent sections.

The framework was developed through the combination of the work many different researchers and authors in the field of leadership. Additionally, the author infuses personal experience, teaching and research conducted over 15 years in the field of leadership. The six aspects below are the culmination of these sources of data.

1. Vision - the direction you are striving for, unwavering
2. Foundation - keeps you grounded and anchored
3. Intentional Focus - selecting purposeful energy and activities
4. Meaningful Relationships - people in our lives as a catalyst or part of the legacy
5. Resiliency - overcome obstacles; change and adapt to continue on the pathway
6. Sustainability - having a long lasting outcome and communicated epilogue

### **Vision**

A strong vision of what we intend the future to become is the spark and catalyst of an L2. A vision is an ideal and unique image (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). It is what those leaving behind a legacy strive to achieve. It is the direction that is being strived for, unwavering. As Lewis Carroll writes in *Alice and Wonderland*, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." Vision drives the L2. It provides a roadmap in the right direction, and more importantly, a guide when we get off track. A vision provides the opportunity for us to look back at our L2 and determine if the course we were on is what we intended to accomplish.

### **Foundation**

A foundation keeps us anchored and grounded to the core values and practice that can create our legacy. Foundation is the core philosophy that sets roots in leadership. Research by Patnaik and Sahoo (2012) describe the foundation of the organization Xerox, established by the founder Joe Wilson, who had consistency with the focus of developing and promoting from within. His foundation was to groom employees to achieve higher positions and advance the organization further. After his retirement, each time that the organization or current CEO went against this philosophy, the results ended poorly. When in duress, the company revisited this core practice; this practice ultimately saved the organization during an economic downturn by selecting leaders from within, who understood the culture and the values of the organization.

### **Intentional Focus**

The outcome of an L2 is determined by the intentional focus a leader brings to the legacy they are creating. This can be done by "finding meaning in their work. It doesn't have to be a giant, earth-shattering kind of meaning. The day-to-day variety - meaningful activities and interactions - are just as good" (Barsh & Cranston, 2011). Intentional focus includes selecting purposeful energy and activities each and every day that lead to the L2. It is the every day focus

on these meaningful tasks that influence others across the organization they are involved in. The people primarily influenced may be successors, employees, colleagues, or outside stakeholders (Galford & Maruca, 2006). The L2 begins with the simple notion that we are looking to change the world from what it is today (Kouzes and Posner, 2006).

### **Meaningful Relationships**

An L2 can leave a lasting impression because of the meaningful relationships that extend the legacy beyond one person. Meaningful relationships include the people in our lives who serve as a catalyst or part of the legacy. The people whom leaders surround themselves with and those they groom carry the L2. Luthy (2000) describes that legacy is created with a sense of collaboration and developing others. These characteristics are also mirrored in Nanton (2011) as the features become "responding to a dynamic environment... strategically and proactively focused on leadership development... willing to work in a collaborative relational partnership" (p. 82). The meaningful relationships associated with the leadership legacy are what hold together the legacy and bind it to the past, present, and future.

### **Resiliency**

An important element to overcome obstacles, change, and adapt to continue on the pathway. The term resilient as described in the Merriam-Webster dictionary is "the ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens." An L2 can be born from experiences. It is not always necessary for something bad to occur, but it is important to set up a system where an L2 can "bounce-back." McAllister (2003) describes this essential component as a commitment within a legacy. If we believe the L2 is valuable, then we will endure. With this idea of commitment, resilience becomes an essential component of a legacy.

### **Sustainability**

The ability to last is the final component to leaving behind an L2. Establishing sustainability and having a long lasting outcome and communicated epilogue of the legacy left behind is important. According to Toor and Ofori (2011) "a common thread among their [the leaders] thoughts about legacy was a long-term impact on others. Some of the leaders mentioned how they wanted to be remembered after they left the company" (p. 34). Based on legacy research by Kouzes and Posner (2006), "our teachers continue to teach as we go on to tell their stories" (p. 24). It is through the continuous communication of an epilogue that the L2 remains.

## **REINFORCING THE L2 FRAMEWORK**

As noted above, the framework was developed based on the work of many different researchers and authors. To test the validity of the framework, specific questions were developed to be used as a starting point in a series of interviews and discussions with prominent positional leaders.

The author designed multiple questions that encompassed each of the six L2 aspects. Hour-long interviews were conducted with national and international leaders. Specific questions guided the discussion, and interviewees were encouraged to elaborate as appropriate. The

interviews were conducted with four people from the United States, and one person from each of the following countries: Australia, Canada, Finland, India, the Netherlands, Portugal and Switzerland. The interviewees were selected based on prominent positions they have held in national and/or international professional organizations, and peer referral. The purpose of interviewing representatives from across the globe was to note any consistencies and/or inconsistencies related to their perspective of leadership legacy. No significant differences were detected based on nationality. While their leadership style varied, their responses to the legacy interview questions were consistent.

The consistency of responses among the interviewees indicates that the framework and L2 practice has merit and the possibility of replication. The framework is intended to help guide other leaders to achieve their optimal outcomes in leadership roles.

The Leadership Legacy (L2) Framework:

1. Vision - the direction you are striving for, unwavering
2. Foundation - keeps you grounded and anchored
3. Intentional Focus - selecting purposeful energy and activities
4. Meaningful Relationships - people in our lives as a catalyst or part of the legacy
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## ONGOING RESEARCH/CONCLUSIONS

To further study the L2 framework, research is being planned which will provide additional insight and perspectives. Specifically, the study will be duplicated with interviewees from many different demographic backgrounds. Also, specific activities and exercises are being developed and tested to foster L2 knowledge and skills across leaders at all levels, positional and non-positional, and across different types of organizations. Ultimately, this ongoing work in L2 may be able to provide opportunities for others to duplicate the successful outcomes of leaders and carry forward with knowledge that may help them establish their own leadership legacy.

Activities by the author have been integrated into various leadership classes as well as professional conferences, however further study of the affects of these outcomes in relation to leaving an L2 will be studied.

Everyone has the potential to leave behind a legacy, based on their distinct purpose in life. It is through the awareness of our legacy, and the implementation of the L2 framework that we are able to learn more about what can do to leave a positive lasting impact.

*If along the way I have been able to energize, motivate and enthuse somebody else, that is fantastic. That is the legacy I'd like to leave ... the ability to motivate someone else – someone to fight in the face of adversity. I hope that is what I have done to my two sons and certainly that is what my father gave me – that enthusiasm. I have always had a desire to do something that would help other people.*

- Australian Interviewee

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