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Paying it Forward
Leading with Purpose
with Chief Randy R. Bruegman, (Ret)

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How to Become the Wealthiest Person in the World

My guess is that I grabbed your attention with the title of this newsletter, but I hate to burst your bubble, this is not about how to make you monetarily wealthy; this is about how to become a leader of impact with the people that you interact with. It was Pericles, a Greek political leader and general during the Golden Age of Athens, who stated: what you leave behind is not what is engraved on stone monuments or, in modern times, a plaque on the wall, but what is woven into the lives of others. It is the legacy that we leave and the positive impact that one has had on others that is the true measure of our personal wealth. It is the type of wealth that can multiply and have an impact for generations.

When you help to change the life of one, you often succeed in changing the lives of many. In the Jewish tradition, the concept of “tikkun olam” (change the world) tells us if we help to change one life for the better, then we change the world.

When we developed the **Leadership Crucible Foundation**, it was built on two core tenants of leadership that I believe are essential for the success of any good leader, but also are foundational to becoming a leader of impact. Those are: a commitment to pay it forward to those who you lead and with whom you work; and leaving the organization better than you found it before you arrived. Just think if every one of us did that in their daily life. How would that change what we see happening in our country, in our community, in our place of work? I would imagine that many of the societal problems that are prevalent today would subside, the vitriolic public discourse would lessen, our communities would be cleaner and safer, and our organizational environment would be built on shared values, trust, and a sense of belonging.

Think about all the people in your own life that have had a positive impact on you, that have led you to where you are today. I have had many throughout my life; four were instrumental in my success and left me with four distinct lessons in paying it forward. The first was the chief who was in charge of recruit school, the first 8-12 weeks of



training a firefighter goes through, who told me he thought I had the skillset to be a chief officer. He provided **Vison**.

It was my first fire chief who was a true innovator and encouraged all of his personnel to explore how to do the business better, to educate themselves, to innovate, and to participate, no matter how long one had been on the job. He provided **Motivation**.

The chief who opened the door for me to become involved, participate and have a presence at the national level. He provided **Opportunity**.

The local business owner and philanthropist taught me the importance of community engagement and integration, and showed me how to do it effectively. He provided **Connectivity**.

Each of these individuals were not seeking anything in return -- no quid pro quo -- they were exhibiting behaviors that was based on their own desire to make a real difference in the lives of others. In my case, they did, and their examples have provided the foundation for me to do the same. I have found the greatest satisfaction has not been in my own successes or the accolades that I have received, but in helping someone else achieve theirs.

I remember when I was a company officer and one of my firefighters had failed the promotion test to become an officer. We worked every day when on duty for over a year to get him ready for the next test. He finished at the top of the list. I was more excited about his promotion than my own. Or, the potential new hire who we were interviewing that had no experience in the field of firefighting, and who had had suffered a significant leg injury, but had persevered through that to pass our fitness test. The other members on his interview panel wished not to move him forward, because he had no relatable experience, but I did anyway. I knew anyone that had the level of determination to overcome that injury was destined to do great things. Today, he is a fire chief leading his own department.

As leaders, the action of paying it forward is the evidence that we don't just talk about doing the right thing to help others; we practice it. If you want to be a change agent to help others, than you have to.

- Make a commitment to do it.
- Look for opportunities to change someone else's circumstance.

- Develop your own skill sets for contributing to others: Vision, Motivation, Opportunity, and Connectivity.

In our roles as leaders and managers, we have many opportunities to positively impact the people with whom we work, but so often it is not top-of-mind for us to do so. Creating that awareness for yourself is critical if you want to become a pay-it-forward impact leader. The good news is, it is not hard to do! You just have to build that into your own slide deck so you are always asking yourself: how can I help someone to change their situation for the better? It is amazing when you begin to think that way; it changes your interaction with the people that you work with and creates an opportunity for you to have meaningful dialog and create positive impacts on others.

Vision

From a leadership perspective, when you hear the term "vision," I think many of us think of what our organizations' future goals and objectives are and what they are trying to achieve in a given time frame -- typically five to ten years. But when we speak to vision in respect to paying it forward, it is about seeing the potential in others that they do not see in themselves.

In some cases, it is also observing that their potential or skillset does not align with their own vision of where they wish to go. I have had many sessions with employees and colleagues who wanted to discuss their career objectives, and what I have found is that many of them really don't see their own strengths or weaknesses as they have become so focused on their daily tasks.

From a leader's perspective, if you are looking through the lens of paying it forward, this is your opportunity to begin to have a meaningful exchange with them. When you have the opportunity to share your insights in this way, I have found these discussions often help to encourage the individual to explore options that heretofore were not even on their radar. I have always found that when you play to your strengths and follow your passions, good things will happen. As leaders, we have an opportunity to help our people find those, and when we do, it is priceless.

Motivation

When I was growing up, no one in my immediate family had ever gone to college, so it was not part of what I was thinking my

future would be. When I became interested in firefighting, a degree was not required to apply... but it was my first chief that motivated me to get my education to position myself to have opportunities in the future. Ten years and three degrees later, he helped motivate me to do exactly that.

As leaders and managers, we sit in a great position to be able to coach, mentor and motivate the people we work to be successful. Often, we never take the time to sit down with them and have a discussion about what they would like to do in their career. I have been surprised during many of these discussions to find that a person that was viewed as a valued employee and a top performer was not happy in their role, and that their passion lied elsewhere. What a great opportunity to motivate them to follow their passion and to help them do it!

Leaders of impact always have the knack of being able to ignite that fire within us. Author Laura Esquivel may have summed it up best when she wrote, "Each of us is born with a box of matches inside us, but we can't strike them all by ourselves." What a gift it is when we can help someone do that!

Motivation

Opening the door of opportunity for others is one of the easiest things to do, yet so many in leadership positions simply don't see this as their role. But it is a foundational piece of paying it forward, and it costs you nothing. All it takes is for you to develop an understanding of how impactful it can be, and it is often quite a simple thing to do.

You are having a critical meeting with your executive team; invite several of your next level staff to sit in and observe, and, when appropriate, to take part in it. A great way to build your bench and maybe gain some perspectives that your executives don't have.

You have an opportunity to speak at a large conference on a process that has gained industry recognition; instead of your going, send one or two of the staff that actually helped to develop it. An excellent way not only to reward their efforts, but to showcase their talents to others in your profession.

You have been asked to sit on the community board; let one of your people

participate and represent the organization, providing them the opportunity to take on this role. An excellent way for them to begin to connect in the community. You get the idea.

Opportunity is about opening the door for others to have experiences they would otherwise not have had unless you provided it or gave them a path to have the experience. What I have found when this has happened to me is that it provided a new vantage point for me to look at my career track and expand my horizon on what was possible. It is one thing to tell someone something, it is another for them to experience it. Creating those opportunities is like planting seeds in their career path. You never know what is going to take root and how they will grow as a result, but it sure is fun to watch them experience, grow and develop.

Connectivity

When I speak about connectivity, I am not referring to what happens in the workplace on a daily basis. While workplace connections are extremely important in

in building a healthy organizational culture, one of the most important things we can do for people is to promote their connections to other professionals and those in your professional community. When you take the time to connect two people it is a statement that you value them both, and it opens the door to create new connections, lasting friendships, and , professional alliances.

One of the most important building blocks in my career has been the ability to leverage my professional and community connections. Most started as a result of one of my colleagues taking the time to make a connection. From a leadership perspective, I

believe that providing connectivity is a value proposition for you as a leader. Leaders who focus on creating connections differentiate themselves from others, as their personal investment helps to creates deep and often lasting relationships, with the purpose and benefit that is solely focused on the people you have connected. It's what I call the creating a flywheel effect on one's career.

Connectivity often creates momentum in one's career and opens doors to new opportunities. From a leader's perspective, when you can connect two people, good things often happen which lead to more good things happening, and that creates an excellent value proposition for any leader.



Chief B's Key Leadership Takeaways

Having the honor of speaking to great leaders in their profession in **The Leadership Crucible Podcast**, we make notes on the key leadership takeaways that are discussed. Will share those with you in hopes that it help you to reflect on your own leadership style, but also to provide some potential talking points that you can discuss with your team. Doing so is a great way to understand your teams, gain perspective on topics, helps you to gain a deeper understanding of how your individual team members think. It is an excellent way to build you team.

- ✓ Paying it forward is to be a part of something that contributes to a better world and makes a real difference in people's lives.
- ✓ The practice of helping one another can spread geometrically through your organization and through society.
- ✓ When you pay it forward, you usually change someone else's circumstances for the better.
- ✓ The person paying it forward grows as much as the person receiving the act of kindness.
- ✓ None of us can do everything, but if everyone does a little, then suddenly a little has become significant and important, and makes an impact.
- ✓ Develop your pay it forward skillsets for contributing to others, Vision, Motivation, Opportunity, and Connectivity.
- ✓ Connecting people is a value proposition for impact leaders.
- ✓ When you pay it forward you are building the foundation for others to follow you example.
- ✓ By paying kindness forward, a cycle of positive behavior can be perpetuated in social groups, including those at workplaces and between long-time business partners (Baker & Bulkley, 2014).
- ✓ "Sometimes you can't pay it back, so you just have to pay it forward." — Randy Pausch



Readers are Leaders

I believe that, to be a good leader, one must be on a continuous quest to gain more knowledge. The leadership benefits of reading are wide-ranging. John Coleman's article in the Harvard Business Review, "For Those Who Want To Lead, Read," highlights that the leadership benefits of reading are wide-ranging. Evidence suggests that reading can improve intelligence and lead to innovation and insight, and, for example, some studies have shown that reading makes you smarter through "a larger vocabulary and more world knowledge in addition to the abstract reasoning skills."

Reading has many benefits, but it is underappreciated as an essential component of leadership development. To that end, we'll provide a few suggested titles for you to consider reading.

Pay It Forward:

Health, Wealth & Success

by Brian Tracey

The Servant

by James C. Hunter

Servant Leadership:

***A Journey Into the Nature of
Legitimate Power and Greatness***

by Robert Greenleaf

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