

## Creating Your Business Legacy

By Ann N. Gatty



When you started building your business, you probably didn't think about building your business legacy. As a new entrepreneur, you began with a vision of what you wanted to build. And there were certain values and principles that were important to you. Over time, these have been woven into the fabric of the company as you moved toward making the vision a reality.

Henry David Thoreau wrote "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them." What does he mean by building castles? This is easily translated into vision. Your castle is your vision and the dream you are building. Taking this idea of castles in the air one step further: building the castle becomes your legacy.

The foundation of your business legacy is not only knowing what is important to you, (your values and principles) but which of these are non-negotiable. As the business develops and grows, the non-negotiables should be consistently communicated to others. Examples of non-negotiables may include the quality of service your company provides, your concern for innovation, the culture of respect you create—each business has a different set of values that become its DNA. It's important that you know yours.

You can see the formation of a business legacy in tangible terms when you see the non-negotiables become part of the operating system that guides the daily interactions of your workforce. The values and principles should be demonstrated through how the work is being completed and how the employees interact together.

President Bill Clinton, in the [2015 Lead Conference, hosted by HR.com](#) stated that every leader should think about his/her job, first of all, to envision, to explain, to include, and to execute. Notice how he identifies the importance of vision. As you are building your business, the vision is the direction you are taking everyone—we've talked about that before. Yet, Clinton is stressing that being able to define the vision and future direction of the company starts with creating a vision. You can't build a legacy if there is no vision.

Like building Thoreau's castle in the air, you must build a foundation to get there. That is why Clinton states that a leader needs to be able to explain and communicate the "how." Everyone within the organization must have the same understanding of what the vision is and their path to get there.

Including everyone with the opportunity to contribute their perspectives and ideas allows the best choices to emerge and the workforce to share ownership in the process. At this point, as a leader, consider how you can embolden rather than hinder their input. As the CEO who wants to create a legacy, practice allowing others to assume leadership roles. In other words, get out of their way.

Finally, executing the strategy that has been developed allows the business to reach the vision—or as Thoreau called it, the castle in the air. The execution may become difficult at times, and take many different turns, so the lesson is that you and your workforce remain focused on the outcome—the vision. And as this process of envision, explain, include and execute becomes systematic within the organization, it can be replicated through multiple generations of leadership thus securing the business legacy.

The question for any business entrepreneur who is transforming into a CEO and building a business legacy, is to define the castle in the air. It is such an important component of success that an entrepreneur turned CEO needs to revisit the vision and refine when necessary to insure a successful outcome. The legacy is the lasting impression. When starting as an entrepreneur, uncertainty was commonplace. As the company grew and became more organized, uncertainty was replaced with stability. Being able to sustain stability creates a lasting legacy.

Do you need help in creating the pathway to a successful business legacy? [Here is a tool that you can use to organize the process](#) and reach your desired business destination. You can learn more about the business building process by [reading this blog post](#).

### About the Author

Dr. Ann Gatty is a business development strategist. She helps her clients clarify the vision for their businesses, boost their leadership capabilities and add quality talent to help the clients reach their goals. Through a collaborative mentoring process, she and her clients create workable strategic business plans and success initiatives, while improving their workplace processes. Dr. Gatty is a frequent writer and contributor [www.AllBusiness.com](http://www.AllBusiness.com), [www.MarketingInsiders.com](http://www.MarketingInsiders.com), and [www.WomenOnBusiness.com](http://www.WomenOnBusiness.com). Her interactive speaking engagements assist participants in discovering new-found talents and skills that they can immediately apply in the workplace. Join her [Facebook Group, Strategic Thinking Summit Elites](#) for strategies you can implement to grow your business success and enjoy camaraderie with others entrepreneur members.