



Carolyn Bradfield, CEO of Convey Services

Helping Employees Realize Their Value

Lessons from Oprah Winfrey's Final Show

Years ago, Michael Myers and Dana Carvey lit up the screen as Wayne and Garth on Saturday Night Live's Wayne's World. Whenever they had a famous guest on the show, they always greeted that guest with the line, "We're not worthy." It's amazing to me how many people walk around with that line from Saturday Night Live as their mantra.

I've written about the exit of Oprah Winfrey from her long-running talk show where she quietly and memorably shared the life lessons that she learned through over 4,000 shows in 25 years. I shared some of Oprah's most impactful insights and decided to expand on a few of them using this platform that Convey Services has so graciously extended to me.

In her last show, Oprah stated, "We often block our own blessings because we don't feel pretty enough, smart enough, not worthy enough." She went on to expand sharing that a common thread shared by women in abusive relationships, convicted felons, child molesters and others that become victims of a less than perfect life is a core belief that they are not worthy of anything better.

In fact, the feeling of unworthiness extends to those that appear happy and successful. According to Oprah, "there is a difference in thinking you deserve to be happy and knowing you are worthy to be happy." Now that the negative impact of poor self worth has been brought front and center by Oprah, is there anything that can be done about it?

This issue is complicated at best. We offer praise to our children, hand out trophies to everyone on the soccer team, whether the team won or lost, and spend hours discussing self-esteem. Yet, the world seems populated by people who think, "We're not worthy".

I spend a great deal of time considering how to build personal and professional self-confidence and a sense of worthiness for the employees at Convey Services. Our company has a particular focus on helping young people get their start in business, gain the confidence they need to succeed and have a safe place to learn the ropes. Here are some of the ideas we implement at Convey to build that sense of worthiness among our employees.

Practice mentoring.

Do the job with your employee and show them how it's done. Investing time in someone communicates the powerful message that they are worthy of your time. As the CEO, I'm never too busy to share lunch, an idea, a strategy or praise with anyone in the company. Consider coming out of the ivory tower and get into the trenches

Don't be a cookie cutter.

We run an inside sales team and it's very tempting to make everyone do the job exactly the same way. However, each person is different and rather than suppress those differences, we develop them as strengths. Although people need to focus on the results Convey needs, we tolerate a level of creativity in how they get them. Suppressing individuality is a clear path to lowering self worth.



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Understand the drivers.

In her final show, Oprah stated, “Everyone wants validation. Everyone shares that common desire – do you see me? Do you hear me? Does what I say mean something? Spend time finding out what motivates your employees, what their hopes and dreams are. Process what they say and let it mean something by trying to match what your company can give back to your employee or helping them explore opportunities outside the company.

Provide feedback.

Don't be generic in the way you coach, counsel or criticize. Be instructive so that the individual knows where they stand, why they succeeded and how to move forward if the result they delivered wasn't enough. Anxiety comes from un-met expectations. Make sure to be clear about what you expect and know that everyone is a work in progress. Reveal how the piece fits the puzzle. Everyone needs to feel that a contribution they deliver makes a difference.

Better manage an exit.

Despite your best efforts, it may not always work out and your employee may need to move on. If this happens, acknowledge your own accountability in the transaction. You may not have screened well enough in the hiring process, trained well enough, been there for your employee. Don't destroy their self worth on the way out the door. Praise what they did while they were there, but acknowledge there was a mismatch that you should have recognized. If you can, help them move on to a new opportunity.

You have the power to add to someone's self worth or detract from it. Knowing how important that one concept is should color how you relate, interact, coach, develop and manage the people that trust their careers to you.