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# Legacy leadership in a time of change



A few leadership shake-ups are happening in 2026. One of the first is that **Warren Buffett** has officially stepped down as CEO of Berkshire Hathaway after six decades.

Time catches up with every leader, and some of the greatest CEOs are retiring and passing the reins to new leaders. It is the closing of an era and the opening of another.

In the past, legacy leadership was associated with longevity, tenacity, stability, and an almost legendary presence at the top.

Legacy leadership is very different now, particularly in innovation and technology. The dilemma for leaders as 2026 approaches is what they leave behind.

## More than old-fashioned control

For decades, leadership rewarded control. By mastering processes, protecting their moats, and taking calculated, long-term actions, the most renowned CEOs created empires.

Buffett was an expert at this strategy. He had a legacy of self-control, tolerance, and **moral clarity**. The environment may have changed, yet those attributes remain important and will always be.

Workers increasingly demand greater purpose, flexibility, and openness. Legacy leadership cannot depend on maintaining control in this new technological and innovative environment. It needs to create something robust enough to operate without you.

I believe the most powerful legacy leaders today are those who design organisations that evolve. They invest in people who challenge them and build cultures where innovation does not depend on a single voice in the room. It is a different form of strength.

**Times are changing, and it's ok to move forward with new ideas**

To give you an example, I'd like to share a story first. A few years ago, I had the honour of moderating a panel at the Palais des Congrès in Paris for a multi-billion-dollar Big Tech company.

I wanted to do an unusual close with the company's French president, and when I first shared the idea, everyone said it would be a no because they had never done it before.

If I hadn't done my research and understood he was a more modern leader, I would never have asked. They said he ultimately would have the decision. After a quick in-person meeting where I shared my vision, he smiled and said yes to the surprise of his team.

This panel was for the young leaders of tomorrow, and although other CEOs were in attendance, the target audience was potential new leaders who needed inspiration.

To do that, you needed to bring more than tradition to the stage, and I will never forget that, for the first time, this big tech company was open to change because I dared to bring an idea to the table, and the top leader was open to listening and change. The moral of the story is that times are changing, and it's ok to move forward with new ideas.

## A rethink of leadership timelines

In technology, leadership cycles are moving faster. **Founders step aside** earlier, CEOs rotate more often, and boards are starting to look for leaders who can guide transformation with new eyes that look to the future, instead of only protecting the past.

It can be an uneasy feeling for many legacy leaders, especially those who built their companies before digital became the backbone of everything.

**The most effective leaders don't act as though they are experts**

To allow their organisations to expand, leaders must know when to step back. I observe it in how tech firms handle AI deployment. The most effective leaders don't act as though they are experts.

They embrace that learning never ends, empower cross-functional teams, and ask better questions. You cease learning the day you die, according to my former mentor Jim Rohn.

## Passing the torch without losing the flame

People often worry that the previous leadership will be erased. That as soon as the title is passed on to a new leader, that legacy will disappear. That doesn't have to be true.

Buffett's influence will not disappear because Berkshire Hathaway has spent decades embedding his principles into decision-making. The same applies in technology.

Balance will remain a major challenge for the new leaders, particularly those taking on roles created by pioneers. As you construct a future your predecessors never encountered, you pay tribute to the foundation.

## The next generation and the future of leadership

At a time when regulations are changing, many of you are taking on leadership roles. Influence is more important than titles, and authority is derived from credibility rather than tenure.



*AI is speeding up decision-making, and younger generations need leaders to advocate for principles that go beyond business and profit*

This generation's legacy leadership will be determined by how inclusive your teams are, how ethically you use technology, and how ready your company is for unforeseen change.

It is the point where technology and leadership converge. We are aware that in the upcoming years, many organisations will experience a wave of leadership transitions.

Founders will retire, CEOs will step down, and boards will seek out fresh talent. Because technology is changing how labour is done, AI is speeding up decision-making, and younger generations need leaders to advocate for principles that go beyond business and profit.

We must consider what it means to lead with impact as we continue to change in 2026. Leaders should emphasise the continuity of purpose while promoting the evolution of practice, since innovation does not imply erasing legacy.

Building systems, cultures, and individuals who uphold the most important values in the face of evolving tools and technologies is the essence of legacy leadership.

Let's keep in mind that leadership has seasons, and individuals like Warren Buffett will enter new phases. Wisdom includes knowing when to step down or change roles.

Think about the legacy you are creating now and ask yourself, "What will the world inherit from me?"