

INCENTIVE

WHAT MOTIVATES

ROI Research Roundup

Will the boom really happen? 14

SURVEY

Travel IQ

Cautious optimism takes hold

18

Last Minute Holiday Gifts

Don't stress out—here's what to get

48

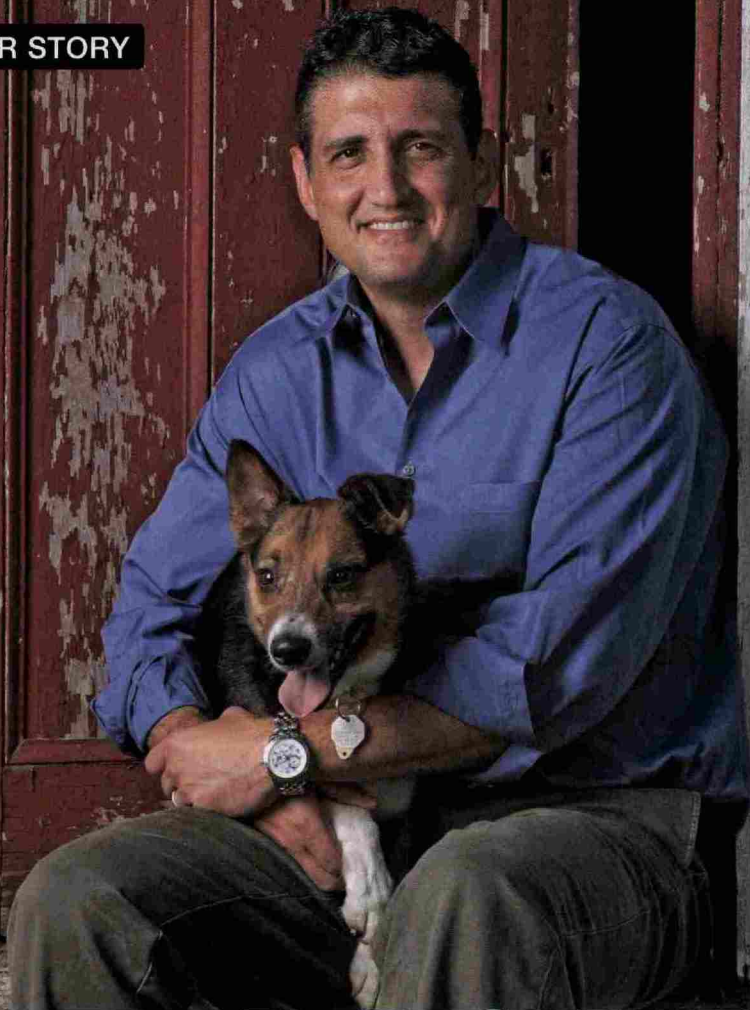
PASSION PLAY 24

Dr. Paul L. Marciano reveals the secret to making employees love their work

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By Vincent Alonzo
Photography by Matt Furman

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

It's more than just Aretha Franklin's biggest hit. Dr. Paul L. Marciano, Ph.D., says it's the key to having intrinsically motivated employees

Dr. Paul Marciano, Ph.D., is the president of Whiteboard, a human relations consulting firm that helps organizations manage and grow the potential of their employees. Dr. Marciano has just published a book, *Carrots and Sticks Don't Work* (McGraw-Hill), which offers a road map for building a culture of employee engagement through trust, accountability, and, most importantly, respect.

Incentive caught up with Dr. Marciano to discuss motivation, engagement, and the difference between the two.

Q. *Is it possible to motivate employees?*
DR. PAUL L. MARCIANO: I'm not sure if that's the right question. If you're talking about using an incentive program to increase someone's discretionary effort—make them

work harder—you can do that for a short period of time for some specific goal or some specific outcome. But is it worth the price that you pay? It often means the person's performance is going to decline during the post-award period. They get the carrot and the effort goes down. It also can lead to demotivating the other employees who didn't get the award.

It doesn't address improving the intrinsic motivation of the employees. It has no effect on making them more passionate about the work they do, and that's really all about engagement. The problem in our field is that we're asking the wrong question. It's all about engaging them and encouraging them to be loyal to the organization and its goals.

Q. *What do organizations need to do to accomplish that?*

MARCIANO: Well, organizations that have been using short-term incentives should keep them in place because removing them might be too drastic a move for employees who have come to expect or even feel entitled to them.

Here's the bottom line: These types of programs typically only reward the best employees. And that's great. You should definitely reward your top employees. The problem is these kind of programs do nothing to engage the poor performers because they know they won't be earning the reward. The middle performers, who usually make up the greatest portion of a workforce, will work towards the award. But most will not get it, and as a result some will become even more demotivated.

Q. *What's the strategy for engaging the employees who make up the middle?*

MARCIANO: People go to work with the best of intentions. No one goes to work with the idea of hating their company. But often that's exactly what happens. The reason for this is that most people experience a profound loss of respect in the workplace. The extent to which an employee feels respected by the organization, their supervisors, and their team members will lead to a high level of engagement within the organization—and that will make them feel motivated.



Q. *How can leaders take that principle and spread it across an entire organization?*

MARCIANO: First off, short-term programs won't produce long-term results. It's kind of like how diets don't work. Just like a person who wants to lose weight has to undergo a lifestyle change, a company looking to put its employees in a position where they are intrinsically motivated has to undergo a culture change. Culture informs behavior and behavior reinforces culture.

The question is how do we get the culture of an organization to lead to sustained improvements in employee motivation and engagement? You have to start at the top of the organization with the behavior of the leadership—specifically the respect that they show to their employees and customers.

Take a company like Apple, for example. They've created a culture that fosters teamwork, passion, and loyalty among both their employees and their customers. That comes

from the top of the organization on down. Events and gatherings play an important role in supporting this culture, but the main driver is the commitment to respect that is key to the organization's management style. Every division in Apple has the feeling that they're making a contribution that is appreciated—and that their product is making a difference in the world. It's not just about award programs.

Q. *What is the difference between engagement and motivation?*

MARCIANO: Employee engagement has been a hot topic in recent years and a lot of people have been using the term as interchangeable with motivation and that's really a mistake because until we get clear about what the two terms are, companies will not be able to come up with effective strategies to achieve either one.

Imagine you are watching a team of employees working hard to achieve a deadline in pursuit of a reward. At the 11th hour,

something goes wrong that will prevent them from achieving the deadline. When that happens you suddenly have two groups of people: one that readily accepts the failure to reach the goal and stops trying and another that regroupes and tries to achieve whatever can be accomplished, short of the goal. And that is the difference between people who are motivated and people who are engaged.

Engagement requires leadership that has created a culture of respect that truly makes people feel they are a part of the organization.

Q. *What can leaders do to foster employee engagement?*

MARCIANO: The first thing leaders have to do is make sure they are walking the talk. Whatever the values or mission statement of the organization is, leaders have to make sure they are personally adhering to that. That's the first level of respect. Then they have to spend time at every level of their organiza-

tion, communicating to employees why their work is important, the contribution they make, and how every employee can take an ownership role in their part of the company. They need to give employees the autonomy and the authority to take a leadership position when it comes to their own work.

I've done a lot of research on personality types and characteristics of effective leaders, and the most important characteristic is trust. Leaders who do not trust their employees tend to micromanage and that kills creativity and initiative. But leaders who give their employees the ball and say, "Run with it, I'm here if you need support," create a totally different experience. Those employees are energized, engaged with their company and their customers, and value the work that they do.

Q. *Where does accountability come in?*

MARCIANO: Accountability is critical. One of the biggest mistakes employers make is that they don't hold employees accountable enough. But that accountability has to exist in an environment of respect. If someone is not getting a job done, a leader must first ask themselves: "Have I given that person enough direction? Have I set expectations clearly? Have I given them the tools, and resources to be successful?" If the answers are all yes, then that person needs to be held accountable.

Q. *What is more effective: individual rewards or a group reward?*

MARCIANO: If a company is working together as a team, the employees should be rewarded as a team. Many of the companies that I consult with are coming to realize that they can't keep throwing money at individuals. The problem is we preach a lot about teamwork, but then we end up having an MVP. Isn't that sort of a contradiction? The whole financial crisis at the end of 2008 is a perfect example of how bonuses can

be dangerous. They lead to people putting their own interests ahead of what's best for their companies, their co-workers and their customers.

Q. *What is the most effective way to celebrate achievement in an environment based on trust and respect?*

MARCIANO: One of the most powerful forms of recognition for employees is to have their supervisor or manager thank and then tell them that they've done a great job and that their contribution is appreciated.

We should celebrate accomplishments. Especially at the team level. And the celebration should be about how their contribution has moved the company forward. It shouldn't be about earning a bonus that's probably going to create some alienation among team members.

Q. *Is it effective to use non-cash awards such as merchandise or travel?*

MARCIANO: There are definitely times to recognize people with those kinds of rewards. One of the most fun things an organization can do is to do something together as a group. But at the same time,

you have to be careful because even within a group there will be some members who contributed more than the others. Those who gave more discretionary effort may feel slighted that everyone is getting the same award. So it is tricky. The best way to offset that is by acknowledging their superior effort in some way. And that doesn't necessarily have to be award-based. It can take the form of increased autonomy in the workplace, or heading up a project team. You've got to find out what reward is most valuable to these individuals.

That's why leaders should have engagement interviews with employees. Especially those employees whose engagement seems to be waning. If they don't have that conversation, the next conversation they may be having is the employee telling them they've found another job. ■

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