

# THE IN-STORE ADVANTAGE



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**"We cannot become what we want by remaining what we are." > Max Depre**

## Not All That Different

One of the most common and funniest comments I've received over decades of speaking to banking groups is some version of, "You know, I think the stuff you talk about is relevant outside of banking."

I've always smiled at that sentiment.

Sure, our jobs are unique in many ways, but so are countless other jobs across various industries.

Although the rules, regulations, structure, history, and challenges of banking are unique, we share many of the same challenges that businesses everywhere face.

Our successes and failures hinge on our ability to develop, motivate, and retain good people.

I've long emphasized to leaders that the main challenge in our business is not knowing what to do.

This doesn't mean that our strategies and action plans are not critical or won't change over time.

However, the real challenge to success lies in maintaining our engagement and motivating our teams to want to excel.

## Motivate Your Self-Motivators

I've had the chance over the years to speak to many banks' "top performers" at various reward ceremonies and trips.

One of my regular jokes at these events is to ask the group to please not mess things up in the coming year.

If I'm invited to speak to a group of top performers and few make it back the next year, it's bad for business.

You're never asked to address a room full of people who are on "action plans" and not long for the company.

Now, that's a group you could really move the needle with! (Juuust kidding.)

After one such event recently, a young lady who was one of the very top performers for her company found me after the ceremony.

She said, "I really needed to hear what you said today about not letting the world grind us down and setting a positive mood for our teams."

I could tell by the way she said it that she wasn't just being polite—she was genuinely expressing that her motivation had been waning lately.

Upon hearing that, I joked, "Hey, wait a

The key word here is "want."

Pittsburgh Steelers coach Mike Tomlin had a great line that resonates: "It's not about what you are capable of. It's about what you're willing to do."

I frequently remind leaders that the cultures they create and the levels of engagement they foster matter even more than the current skill sets of their team members.

All the talent and ability in the world is of little use if a person is disinterested or disgruntled.

Honestly, there was a time that lots of managers would give me a bit of an eye roll for focusing so much on "culture."

The attitude often seemed to be that culture was something you only worried about after you had everyone trained, competent, and knowing what they needed to do.

But we things known as "humans" tend to show markedly different levels of commitment depending on the way we feel about environments.

Spend real time talking to your teams about how they are doing, what they are enjoying, what is challenging them, etc. along with what you need from them today.

You may get the benefit of someone's body and mind when you dictate tasks.

But you tend to also get the benefit of their heart when you make them feel seen and heard.

Teams tend to listen to leaders' words but mirror their actions.

Is your heart in your actions today?

minute. You're one of the best of the best. Aren't you supposed to be a self-motivator?"

She laughed and said, "Oh, if people only knew how hard it is to bring positive energy to work every day."

I responded, "Well, that's what you get for making it look easy. People assume it's not that hard for top performers. Often, though, the opposite is true. You just do a better job of acting."

One of my main takeaways from our brief chat was a reminder that our top performers, while producing numbers that might allow others to think they can coast, are often more stressed and tired than their peers.

At another bank's top-performer event that same week (it must be the season), a senior manager told me that she believes these events are more important than some might think.

She said, "We spend so much time putting out fires and dealing with problems that it's easy to take the people we don't have to worry about for granted."

I agree with that sentiment.

Whether or not an institution has formal events or trips for top performers, leaders should remember that the folks you never have to worry about appreciate knowing that you do.

Your "self-motivators" likely work harder than most to make it look easy.

Strive this week to let them know it doesn't go unnoticed or unappreciated.

**"It's always better to be at the bottom of the ladder you want to climb than at the top of the one you don't." » Martin Freeman**

*Dave Martin, author of The In-Store Advantage, has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.*

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