

Mark: Hi, and welcome to New Leader Journeys with Mark Walztoni. My guest for this hour is Martha Finney, a consultant specializing in employee engagement and the author of quite a few books, most recently "The Truth About Getting the Best From People". Her clients and interviewees over the years have included leaders from Caterpillar, Star Wood, Rubbermaid, the Department of Commerce, Marriot, Hewlett-Packard, among others. She's a regular blog contributor on Jobbing.com as well as a moving speaker on the subject of passion in the workplace and the essential role of leaders in trading and engaging culture. Welcome, Martha!

Martha: Thanks for having me today.

Mark: You're quite welcome. Martha, this new book of yours, "The Truth About Getting the Best From People" is your most successful book to date. It's only been out for a couple of months and I know it's already in its second printing. What prompted you to write this particular book?

Martha: The idea for this book came as a consequence of my working with one of the most popular, most prominent, most frequently listed companies on Fortune's Best Companies to Work For list. I was writing a white paper for them on tracking their entire employee engagement process, but what came to light repeatedly was the fact that as wonderful as their engagement initiative was, that everything would fall apart when managers simply forgot to say hello to their employees in the morning.

I realized that as much as we were all raised to behave ourselves and be nice on the playground, somehow when you become a manager, just being (inaudible 1:48) basic decent behavior seem to fall away. The truth about getting the best from people is a list of what I consider the best forty-nine prominent awareness's that managers should keep in mind when it comes to actually being an engaging manager.

Mark: When you say that, you reminded me of the book that came out a few years ago, "Everything I Needed to Know, I Learned in Kindergarten". Are you saying it's that basic?

Martha: Well, not quite that basic, but almost. The point of

this book is that it really does cut to the chase in terms of the message to the managers. It's basically to be real, decent human beings here. You can have all the high falutin' thoughts that you want, but when it comes right down to basics, moment by moment human interaction, that's where engagement really hits the ropes.

Mark: Woody Bridges, one of the authors about managing transitions and going through individual and organizational change, often talks about finding the point of your greatest pain and making a career out of it. I know you were a journalist before you were a consultant specializing in employee engagement. What brought you to this field? Is there any story of an effective or ineffective boss that helped motivate you along the line?

Martha: How much time do you have?

Mark: Now it's time for a good story.

Martha: I guess several things sort of brought me to this place. One is that I am a daughter of a man who was deeply passionate about his work. He was actually an undercover operative for the CIA in the 50's and 60's. Our entire family was directed toward the mission of saving the United States against the Red Menace, basically. I saw what a purpose-driven career was all about it. It pretty much set my bar very high in terms of my expectations for myself.

Just a few months before I graduated from college, he was on assignment in Mexico City teaching this class. Even though he had been a high performing, loyal, dedicated individual for the agency, he was given a pink slip in the middle of the class that he was giving in Mexico City. Suddenly, his career came to a screeching halt.

I went from observing a man totally impassioned by his work to observing a man who had just gotten fired for no reason at all. That was part of it.

The next part was when I graduated from college, I worked for a series of non-profit organizations that pretty much (inaudible 04:42) for the purpose and the cause of (inaudible 04:45). I felt that as (inaudible 4:49) organizations were and the way the managers were behaving

to the underlings was pretty much far from humane. I began to see stupid management behaviors and actions. I realized there are some understandings that need to be built up here.

Mark: Your example really reminds me and I think of where we are from an economic standpoint and maybe one of the barriers or difficulties with engagements is just the subject of layoffs. Why is it especially compelling now that we're in an economic slump. Why should companies care about whether or not their people are engaged, especially in these times when there are so many layoffs. It seems the pendulum has swung back to being a buyer's market right now.

Martha: I guess it is probably considered a buyer's market when you look at the numbers. Several things come to mind. I've seen so many parallels drawn between the times of the 70's when I was coming into the job world. One of the most oft-uttered expressions during those days was, "Just be grateful you have a job." I'm hearing various mutterings of that this time.

We could overlay the 70's on this time. I think now if we really wanted to, that would be very stupid. I think (inaudible 6:18) time is flying for everybody. We're seeing new cycles of up economies and down economies very quickly. We remember as it was just yesterday what the last economy was like. When you have a lot of companies who treat their employees without any kind of acknowledgment to the understanding of engagement, the basic theory of, "Just be grateful you have a job," employees are going to remember that.

You have a lot of survivors after layoffs who are going to be watching how they're going to be treated. Before too long, of course, the pendulum is going to swing back and it's going to be a seller's market again. The companies that behave themselves now are going to be the companies that do well when it comes to positioning themselves back up again later.

Mark: You're reminding me of Radio Shack's approach to laying people off. Someone e-mailed four hundred people. Their point of view was they're preserving the privacy. On the other hand, I've got to think that's going to haunt them for a time to come. Perhaps it reflects a deeper part of

their culture. How does organizational culture affect engagement or leaders who really want to engage their employees?

Martha: You've touched on an area that is one of my special (inaudible 7:43), which is the emphasis on surveys when they come to the engagement world. I don't want to say anything disparaging about surveys in general because I do think they're incredibly important, but they become a little like a smoke screen that managers and organizations use to say, "Yes, we're active in engagement. Look, we've got these surveys."

Somehow that lets individuals off the hook in terms of reminding them that we're talking about individual human beings here, each one having a saga of their own, a journey of their own, feelings of their own. I don't want to say anything disparaging about Radio Shack. I can think of several other companies that joined that list. Really stupid things like that will haunt them in the future.

It is the companies like - I can think of CyLinks (ph) in Silicon Valley - that heroically laid off nobody during the downtime in 2000. Those are the companies that people will remember and honor later when the time comes to reach out. Do the honorable thing person by person rather than just aggregate the surveys because they can work against those.

Mark: It seems that companies do employ attitude surveys and just in my own career, I've seen even the term used to describe it go from employee satisfaction survey, at one end of the spectrum. People can be satisfied, but not necessarily productive. Then to employee motivation and then employee engagement.

Martha: (Inaudible 09:26) in there.

Mark: Beautiful. Exactly right. The notion of what they're saying about a company, their intent to stay and what they're telling others. When you see that evolution over the years, is there some underlying approach to how people behave and think and what it takes to be productive in that span from, "Let's see if they're satisfied," to, "Let's see if they're really engaged."?

Martha: I'm happy to see the ongoing evolution of the (inaudible 09:56). Employee satisfaction seems to be okay. (Inaudible 10:04) contented pout. There's a very popular book on the subject, (inaudible 10:12), but there's something kind of stupid about just simply looking at satisfaction.

Commitment was en vogue in the late 1990's and that had to do more with how mindlessly employees were chained to the company regardless of what the company was doing, whether it was flying high or failing fast. Engagement, to my mind, speaks to really smart, wisened-up, strategically savvy individuals and organizations meeting each other, matching each other's needs and skills, doing business together for as long as they can and want to and then they move on. It just feels very adult to me. I love that word, engagement.

Mark: Just on the notion that sometimes you have to look into the mirror, the past, to see the present, if I can be a little colorful here. I remember coming up through the ranks with in leadership development and human resources and I remember just about every workshop you went to talked about Theory X and Y. They showed you (inaudible 11:25) pyramid. The thinking was, "You really engage people if you listen to them or if you ask them about the work, just thinking about quality circles and total quality management and re-engineering."

It was a revolutionary thought at the time. Maybe the person with the stop watch was telling you the fifty ways to put a bowl on a wheel at the factory has all the answers and then getting employee involvement. Do you see something similar where employee involvement perhaps was the first stage of the journey to commitment and engagement the same way as maybe satisfaction was? Any thoughts about how the whole field of employee engagement and commitment has evolved in that way?

Martha: I'm reminded of some work that Jim Schaffer does, who is an consultant out of Annapolis, Maryland. He goes into organizations like FedEx, Corning and ConAgra. They had him in big, strategic business management problems. He takes the problem to communication and instead of just cranking out little newsletters about, "You must do better," he actually uses the communications department as the tool to elicit input from employees throughout the

organization on how to do better. I think that what's happening now, especially in the communication side, performance-based communications is showing that when you've got employees who are self-respecting and totally engaged in the future prospects of their company, they're the ones with the answers to the organizational problems.

I think that going back to the people like that is a really good way of creating engaging conversations that's going to move the business forward. It's not just a matter of making nice with the peeps. You were mentioning listening to employees as an engagement tool. You can listen to employees or you can look like you're listening to employees. Employees know the difference. The one thing that you know for a fact will be disengaging is not listening to them at all.

Mark: At some point in the employee engagement area, there's a number of people who (inaudible 13:54) implements. I know our topic today is how to be an engaging leader right now. I want to get to that in a minute about what leaders can do right now. You also just mentioned communications people. Who are some of the other natural partners or what are some of the alliances within organizations that you feel are effective to focus on employee engagement?

Martha: Are you talking about on a departmental level or are you talking about anybody?

Mark: I would say on an organizational level. If an organization was interested in increasing the engagement of their employees, where would they start? Who would they have in the room to even have that discussion?

Martha: To have the conversation?

Mark: Mmhmm.

Martha: That's an interesting question. Depending upon the organization, obviously HR should be in the room. I think that a company can take on the engagement initiative inside a very small business meeting, some far flung area, and lead the way. People like to say that engagement's not going to happen unless the CEO is entirely on board. I suppose that's true in most cases, but I sure would hate to have the fact that the CEO is

not on board stop an entire organization from losing (inaudible 15:08) engagement anyway.

It doesn't matter who starts it. What's important is how sincere they are. If they're just doing a little tap dance, then what's going to happen is engagement is going to bite them on the butt. It's much better if they don't do anything. If you can start it authentically, even in the smallest group, then that's better than nothing.

Mark: Martha, you organized your latest book with forty-nine specific chapter titles. One of them that I was looking at is, "You Can't Give What You Don't Have". Also, "Your Behaviors Are Your Brand". How do those two chapters tie into what you're saying about getting people involved and also that important element of actually walking the talk versus sending out the memo or putting up the poster?

Martha: Mark, you can't give what you don't have. Again, remember that this book is specifically written for individual managers. My intent was that this book would be a wonderful textbook for first-time managers, front-line supervisors, people who are just now beginning to understand that what they do and how they believe really will affect the engagement factor of their employees. They need to have the picture painted for them. (Inaudible 16:32) elements are in place.

One of those elements that are in place is that the manager has to be engaged him or herself. It's really unfair to ask that individual to be super-engaging if that individual isn't feeling like he or she is being treated with respect, that he or she has the job that - I should stop saying he or she because that will be awkward after a while - that they will have the ability to do their job.

They need to have all those engagement factors in place themselves before they can be expected to be engaging as well. Then once that's in place, which is covered in "You Can't Give What You Don't Have", their behaviors are their brand. Things that are the simplest, like remembering to say hello to your employees first thing in the morning, remembering to say thank you. Just the basics.

It's astounding how all that has fallen through the

cracks. Every single time a manager apologizes for a misstep, that's engaging right there. Humility, honesty, sincerity, human-to-human interaction, those are the things that are going to be the most powerfully engaging behaviors. It doesn't matter what (inaudible 17:51) doing. It doesn't matter how fancy the internet site is. It doesn't matter how lavish the social responsibilities or community relations programs are. It doesn't matter how cool the product is. If you've got a manager who can't even bring himself to say hello to you in the morning, you've got an engagement issue.

Mark: That reminds me a little bit of - I forget who said it - the notion of values are caught, not taught, and that all the courses in the world (inaudible 18:25). Or for example, the CEO who talks about that, but is completely silent in the elevator on the way up to work where the employees are. Something doesn't fit.

Martha: Right. I'm reminded of Hewlett-Packard and how the leaders for the longest time were completely honored and respected and celebrated for the fact that they knew people in the hallways and they bothered to say hi. There was never that, "I am loftier than thou," attitude inside HP and a lot of companies in Silicon Valley.

Mark: In a way, I suppose with HP that it's the notion that we're still in a sense in the garage working on the product. It's generally not the leather chair in the garage or the windowed offices. Let's talk a little bit about that. How do some of the environmental factors support a belief in employee engagement? It's a little awkward in how I've expressed it, but maybe I can sharp it.

Maybe I can expand with an example. Some companies don't have offices with walls. I'm thinking of Intel where as I understand it, Andy Grove was there on the floor. There was no cubicle farm. People could see he was working. There were conference rooms when people needed to take a conversation offline, but it was the notion that the carpet doesn't grow incrementally as you go up the elevator to the executive floors. Are you saying organizations also try to connect the ergonomics and those types of factors in an environment to supporting or increasing employee engagement?

Martha: I suppose so. The easy answer to that question is yes. Obviously you've got companies who are famous for their tricking you out of their offices. I think Google's out there. I would like to sort of shine the light in another direction. That is that when you have a cause that has ignited the imagination of all your people and they are rallied around it and they will go to any length in service of that cause. It really doesn't matter what your (inaudible 20:50) looks like.

I'm reminded of a woman that I interviewed a few years ago who was an animal shelter worker in Asheville, North Carolina. She says that she (inaudible 21:06) herself a (inaudible 21:07) there because she feels that because of what she does, it's far more important than anything else that she's doing. She's in a cold, concrete building doing various types of things with animals in various degrees of abuse. She doesn't have anything that's ergonomic. She's lifting and hoisting and shoveling.

Unfortunately, she spends one day a week euthanizing animals. She's got what anybody would consider to be a pretty crappy job, but she sees that there's an amazing, immense amount of value in the work she does and she's deeply, deeply engaged.

Mark: It sounds like she's able to connect her work to some higher meaning and purpose.

Martha: Exactly. I think that is the core engaging thing right there. I have this little formula that I discovered as a result of this cross-country road trip that no matter what we do for a living, what we do serves one or more of three things. That is to relieve pain, restore hope or bring beauty into the world. When you are able to identify which one or more of those three things your job serves, then your engagement is sustainable regardless of whether you're sitting in one of those power chairs.

Mark: Let's talk about the individual leader again. We have some - I'm sure on the line are people who support individual leaders. Let me throw out a couple of very brief scenarios and maybe you can put yourself in that consulting or coaching hat. What would you recommend?

For example, you mentioned that your book could also be viewed as a textbook for first-time supervisors or

managers. Someone who is going to be a manager for the first time. They're making that transition from individual contributor. This is before they actually start. I know in my own work, I had to think about preparing for the assignment, what happens in the first 30, 60 or 90 days and how you sustain that. So someone's going to be a manager, a leader of others for the first time through the organization chart.

People are leaders in a different way, but now someone's going to have fifteen people reporting to them and they're looking ahead and saying, "How do I present myself? How do I approach that first meeting with my group?" Say they're running a new company. I have a blank slate and now I'm going to go in. How can I set the foundations for employee engagement with my new team?

Martha: Assuming that the company culture is consistent with the notion, I think that the first thing that a new manager can do, especially going into a brand new company altogether, is position himself as a (inaudible 24:13) leader and a servant leader. A lot of people have been making (inaudible 24:19) servitude, which is a little different. You're not groveling to your people; you're serving them.

One of my favorite pieces of advice comes from (inaudible 24:31), who used to be the senior VP of HR for Yahoo! And Southwest Airlines. She says to go into your first meeting and make a list of all the things that your people would like to have changed. Pick a couple of them and get them done. That shows you're willing to walk your talk. She's not suggesting that you change the world. You're just cleaning the filter, having a carpet repaired, something that shows you're people that you're there to help them do their job best.

If you remember that your job is to help them do their job, that it's not their job to make you look good, then you're going to have an alliance of team members on your staff who will support you and take you as far down any road that you would want them to go. I think the first thing to do is position yourself as a servant leader and remind everybody that you know that you're there to help them, not the other way around.

Mark: That's interesting advice, too, about finding out the

things that the group would want changed and then pick one or two, two or three, that are, as I've heard it expressed, small enough to win and big enough to matter.

Martha: I like that expression. That's a good one.

Mark: It ties to the notion, too, as a new leader goes into a role, getting a couple of critical wins give them momentum and gives people the trust that if they were able to get those couple of things done, they're on their way to do (inaudible 26:08) things.

Martha: And they're visible. The flip side of that, of course, is that some people will say, "Don't try to change anything for the first ninety days. Just sit back and keep your lips zipped." There's something to be said for that as well. You don't want to waltz into a company and say, "Everything here is crazy. I'm fixing it all. A new day has begun," because you'll find that you're going to get fed up pretty quick.

Mark: Yeah, people generally resent having a messiah arrive at their workplace to tell them all the horrible things they've been doing in the past and how only one person can save them. Guess who? The new person!

Martha: I once had an editor tell me that if I wanted to continue writing for the magazine, that I could expect that he would hold my feet to the fire. This was after I had been writing for the magazine for fifteen years and bringing awards for the magazine. I had once been the editor of the magazine myself.

He had already revealed that he had never edited a magazine in his entire life. And by the way, if I intended to keep writing for him, he would hold my feet to the fire. I pretty much decided to fire him. Employees can fire their bosses just as easily as the other way around and probably more often than the other way around. It may not be as obvious.

Mark: Not the (inaudible 27:40). There's the (inaudible 27:42) of your feet and the other is quitting in place. I suppose that reminds me a little bit of your chapter, "You Can't Give What You Don't Have" and "Your Behaviors Are Your Brand" because I suppose in that case, the person, rather than taking a learning approach of, "I'm

new at this. I know you have some experience with this," it was immediately hierarchical. I'm the boss!

Martha: Instead of it being, "I'm new at this and I know you have experience in this," he was, "I'M NEW AT THIS AND I KNOW YOU HAVE EXPERIENCE IN THIS, SO GUESS WHAT? I'M HOLDING YOUR FEET TO THE FIRE!"

Mark: I guess this goes to the notion, too, of just how the non-verbal's and body language flow into this. Certainly, I imagine what you didn't hear were the first two parts of that message, "I'm new at this. I want to work with you." All you heard was, "feet to the fire" and that's it.

Martha: And saw "Stupid Boss", so I fired him. There was some body language that was also involved, but that's another story altogether.

Mark: Let's say someone is in their current role, again, as a new leader. They'd always been viewed one way, they've been a good member of the team. Now they're coming into the leadership role and perhaps their predecessor had some practiced skills in employee engagement behaviors. How can a manager essentially turn around the situation just in their own group?

Martha: Their group itself?

Mark: Yes.

Martha: I think that in this particular case, (inaudible 29:28) important for the supervisor to be a servant leader because what's happened is he's floated above the heads of the people who used to be his colleagues just last week. He's thinking that some people are wondering, "How come he got it and I didn't?" Other people are going to be saying, "If he got it, that must mean I have to wait even longer for my promotion. (Inaudible 29:51) meant." What makes him the boss over me? What makes you the boss over me? I think that often more so, humility and being a servant leader is the name of the game and finding those things and fixing them quick.

Mark: Earlier on in the discussion, we talked about the differences about motivation and satisfaction and engagement and commitment. Perhaps it would be useful to

our listeners to hear your definition of engagement. I've heard you use the phrase "paced", which sounds like an acronym.

Martha: It is. It's not PASTE. It's PACE.

Mark: I'm sure people will remember that.

Martha: I came upon this acronym in service of the need to find out ways you can immediately take engaging action and make a difference instantly. It kind of works along with the title of this program, which is How To Be An Engaging Leader Now. This is the matter of the accumulation of small things. It's the matter of making a difference now. Now I'm going to try to do it and spell it right. It's P-A-C-E-D.

P stands for purpose (ph), passion, and person-by-person. Then it's remembering, from the supervisor's perspective, always remember that often people who work for you have some kind of a purpose (inaudible 31:36). It may be aligning them for the purpose of an organization, being totally impassioned by the mission critical objective of the company, or it may be a personal purpose that's driving this person. Everybody has a story. Everybody has a saga that they're bringing to work. To remember that's what they need you to be speaking to helps the leader relate to each individual one-by-one.

A is for achievement and accomplishment. That means that everybody should make not of the fact when projects are completed, when things are done, when goals are achieved. They should notice that and celebrate it instead of saying, "That was yesterday. This is today. Let's move on." Achievement, accomplishment needs to be celebrated.

C is for compassion, one thing. Again, managers need to remember that their employees are indeed people, but it also has to do with consistency. If your company has a set of values that need to be promulgated, the way you behave has to be consistent with the values of the company. I'll give you an example of one of the things that was extremely disengaging for me.

In the late 70's, I was working for an animal rights organization that was really big in preserving marine mammals. It's a very famous organization, as a matter of

fact. We were told during a date (ph) that we could only make a certain kind of salary because all of the money was going to save the little (inaudible 33:18) creatures. I was living in Manhattan in those days. My salary was once a month, I brought home a check of \$525.00. My apartment rent was \$275.00. That left me however much left there was for the rest of the month.

I was in service of the little itty-bitty creatures so it was worth it because I was making the world a better place. So Christmas time came along and the office manager came waltzing into the office wearing a full-length fur coat. She said -

Mark: Not of any of the animals you were taking care of, I hope.

Martha: Well, she said, "Look what he gave me," meaning the celebrity figurehead of the organization. "Look what he gave me for Christmas." In the meantime, all the rest of us - first of all, the disparity was just insane. We were (inaudible 34:21) in French mustard for our Christmas presents. We each had this big jar of (inaudible 34:28) mustard on our desks. She comes waltzing in wearing a fur coat, which of course flies in the face of all our values anyway. Then she said, "Next year, I hope it's a seal coat."

Mark: Oh my goodness. Talk about tone deaf.

Martha: That, once again, that was one of those days that I quit in my heart. Consistency, the way managers behave with their employees in every single way must be consistent with the values of the company.

Mark: I'll never forget that story.

Martha: Neither will I. E stands for excellence. I think that there's nothing more disengaging to a high quality or high performing employee than being surrounded by managers and coworkers who really don't care about excellence. You're going to lose high performers that way when you're too cavalier about quality work.

D stands for decency. Once again, when the managers behave in a just plain decent fashion, they treat everybody up and down with respect; they're going to

sustain engagement. These are things that they can do right this very second. Every single one of those things can be put into play immediately. You don't have to wait for the second quarter to roll around for these things to happen.

Mark: Thank you. I'm sure we'll see PACED on your blog and also in your next book.

Martha: Maybe!

Mark: Very interesting. (Inaudible 36:11) new hires just a few moments ago, Martha, and one of your chapters is entitled, "New Hires Can Inspire Current Employees". What do you mean by that?

Martha: Every time a company brings on a new employee, that company is telling the rest of you in the employee population (inaudible 36:30) the future. If you bring on a new employee who isn't (inaudible 36:37), the incumbents are going to sniff that person out immediately and they're going to see the decline of the regime. If you bring in a new employee who is not necessarily an A player, but just somebody who really is passionate about what they do and maybe comes (inaudible 36:56) with a lot of really great accomplishments under their belt, that's going to inspire the incumbents to say, "Oh, this is where we're headed. This is the direction we're going."

Every time a company makes a choice among its candidates, the company is (inaudible 37:12) for its future. What that vote is going to tell the rest of the employees, "This is where we're headed. I like it," or, "Hmm, this is where we're headed. I think I'll start looking elsewhere."

Mark: Too, I think, it comes from a recruiting standpoint, seeing good people come in is also a message that says the company's growing, if you say, "Boy, I'm glad viewed as positive as well."

Martha: That's a good point. "Oh, this is the club I belong to. Hot dog, I like this."

Mark: That sometimes, too, in the interview process, I find having people who are those paragons or exemplars of engagement and performance involving them in the

interview process starts to send the message, "Boy, I'd really like to work with this group. Look at the standards and I can be part of this." In leadership development, there's a story about three models. One model is (inaudible 38:09). We go out and get the best people. We make our own (inaudible 38:13). We can take people in and we'll build it. The third one is, "We'll settle for milk." I suppose if the new hires are telling you, "We'll settle for milk," that's a message to the recruiting crew.

Martha: Yeah, it lowers the bar of expectations in a big way. What I think you're bringing up here, the dichotomy between the A player and the B player, there's still a lot of emphasis placed these days on the importance of A players. I think that even though I just said everything I just said, that you can have highly engaging and engaged new hires from the B player list. There was an article in Harvard's Business Review a few years ago that was talking in praise of the B players.

I discuss this in my book, also, which is that the B players are your Steady Eddies. They're the ones who are here to do the work. They're here to do the work well. They're the ones who hold the institutional knowledge. The A players may just be passing through. (Inaudible 39:20) sparkle of the A player blind you to the solid meat and potatoes performance of the B players because you're going to end up with a much steadier organization that way.

Mark: It reminds me again of the recent Wall Street Harvard Business Review article about the curse of the superstar CEO, that in fact once that patina wears off, your behaviors are your brand and that becomes on the reasons for such high turnover. Some of the folks on the call, I'm sure, work for global organizations or organizations that have virtual teams. I just read an article yesterday in the Journal that in 2005, an Intel survey of its employees found that 20% of its professionals had never met their boss and half of them never expected to.

In 2006 they extended their survey to IBM, Sun, Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft and Cisco, the percentages were even greater. How can managers build engagement beyond their own line of sight?

Martha: It's such an interesting question and I'm thinking about my own personal experience along those lines. Right now, I'm actually co-authoring a book with somebody I've never met. Overlaying my personal experience along those lines, I'm thinking, "How does this work with my co-author?" who is my client. So as my client, I guess you could consider her my boss. I think the reason our relationship works is because there is rapid response, open communication, trust, respect and the understanding that we each bring our own piece of expertise to the table and we know that the other one is going to perform accordingly.

Going to the organizational perspective along these lines, I think that ongoing free communication, not letting anybody wait and wonder about anything has got to be the secret of being able to manage cross-country, cross-organizations, and cross-cultures. I think that the most prevalent disengaging factor is making an employee start to wonder and wait for a response because then the employees start coming up with their own conclusions.

Mark: I've got a couple more questions and then let's go to questions that have been submitted by our audience. First, a follow-up question to just what you were discussing about virtual teams, global teams. Are there any technology processes? I hesitate to use the word solutions because it's so overused. But how can technology support that bonding and socialization process for teams that may never meet face-to-face?

Martha: Obviously, I think that anybody who is doing global work right now probably has all the new technology in place. I was UBS a couple months ago doing some work for them and we had a meeting, a video conference with their colleagues in London. Being something of a (inaudible 42:53), that was pretty darn cool. I thought that was really nifty. Obviously, you have to be able to stay awake at weird hours.

The social networking, I think it's something that can really be used to great advantage beyond what's being done now. Once again, my particular hot button with engagement is the idea that we should use every single engagement initiative as a way to allow individuals to show up as individuals. If you're going to have a social

networking function in your internet, make it about things that are beyond work. Say, for instance, your colleague down the hall knows how to install dimmer switches. Put that on the social networking site. "I am wild about home electronics. If you have a question about high speed internet at home, come see me." This way, individuals can get to know each other as people, not as just simply their job title.

Mark: Something similar to that, just with the rise in blogging and the notion that over two hundred million people go onto MySpace and Facebook, that especially from a generational perspective, there's a willingness and an openness and, in fact, there may be people using these social networking tools one step ahead of even their organization.

It seems like - are there generational differences in engagement? Would you advise a leader to look at Generation X and say, "I'm going to support their engagement in this way, this person falls in this bucket."? What's your (inaudible 44:40) on that? I think I know. A sound is worth a thousand words, but why do you (inaudible 44:47)?

Martha: We can talk about the world as I would like it to be or talk about the world as it is and reported to me. I've heard from managers that working with their younger employees is a nightmare because they are supposed to be so entitled and so privileged and so hand-holdy and all that stuff. Then I talked to a senior VP of HR for a major global organization a few months ago and I asked him, "What do you think about these extra demands of the (inaudible 45:25)?" He said, "There is no such a thing. Just show them one good recession and that'll whip them into shape right off the bat."

I think that you get the expectations; you get the behaviors that you allow. I don't think it's necessary to hand-hold youngsters coming up. I think that to assign every millennial into the bucket of the entitled is really unfair to an entire age group. In the meantime, I think that there are a whole lot of spoiled baby boomers out there, so it's all about the behavior expectations you assert in your organization, in your culture.

Mark: It sounds like the adapting and marketing techniques are segmenting down to less degree. Maybe it would be more useful to focus on inclusion.

Martha: Yeah. And once again, not assign anybody a set of anticipated characteristics and behaviors based on their type, but once again, dealing with people person-to-person.

Mark: You are just about to launch a new teleseminar series called "Engagement Journeys With Martha Finney".

Martha: Yes!

Mark: Are you feeling positive about that? What are your plans for the series and what can you tell some of the folks on the line they can look forward to?

Martha: I am so excited about this thing. It is a thrill. I'm going to be interviewing other experts in engagement in all different aspects of people engagement from holding leaders accountable, which is going to be the first program on June 4th. I'm interviewing the former head of SAS Institute. People might know David Russo. The SAS Institute was actually featured on 60 Minutes as a company to celebrate for its engagement factor.

You know the old joke it's going to be a bad day when you see 60 Minutes at your door. In this case, it was a good day. I'm going to be looking at engagement from all sorts of different angles, holding leaders accountable, engaging cross-cultures, work-family balance, wellness, you name it. It's going to be a fantastic series and I can't wait to talk to all these people. I'm hoping that the collective wisdom that will come out of this will really shine a big light on the entire world of engagement.

Mark: I think that's an opportunity, too, that you and I have talked about, the rise in learning communities, people who have a common interest or a common perspective, be it succeeding in leadership roles, engaging employees. That's another way to really build these bonds where we're sharing across organizational boundaries and we're really focusing on things we believe in and what's important.

Let's pose some questions. The first one is: We'd love to be on the Best Companies To Work For list, but we just don't have that kind of money for things like free gourmet coffee, four-star chefs and luxurious trips (inaudible 48:37). How do we compete with that?

Martha: Well, I think the answer is don't compete with that. I've heard a lot of people start to turn their noses up at these Best Employers lists for one thing. I know one person says that anytime she sees a company on the list, that's one company she knows that she won't even apply for.

Not to be disparaging, once again, on the Best Employers list, it's not about hitting the list. It's about behaving in a way that has employees wanting to come to work. You don't need the fancy coffee. You don't need the fancy desks. You need to just be consistent and decent with your employees and remember what your values are and make your decisions and operate accordingly. The word will get out that you're a great company to work for regardless of whether or not you're on that list.

Mark: Another question is: How can leaders tell whether their people are engaged or not? Or more importantly, whether or not there's been a swing in one direction over another?

Martha: Obviously, the dreaded employee engagement survey will report that. However, that information may end up being three to four months old by the time the results hit the desk. You're going to see it in accident rates. If you've got a manufacturing floor, you're going to see safety issues. You're going to see nutrition. You're going to see it in terms of heightened disciplinary record.

You're also going to see it in the reduced level of quality employees who are applying for your openings. If you start seeing that suddenly all the top-notch candidates are not showing up at your door, even C level people aren't showing up, you're going to have to wonder what these employees are saying behind your back.

Mark: It sounds like some of these indicators might be lagging indicators. In other words, you can look at a turnover number and think about voluntary turnover, but by that

time, you're kind of navigating the boat by watching the wake. Instead of navigating the boat by watching the wake, Martha, how can you get ahead of it? Are there conversations that can occur with individuals or other leaders in the organization? How can you look ahead of that?

Martha: All sorts of ideas come to mind, but they don't seem to be very surprising. Once again, it's like, behave like a kindergartner. You know, hold hands when you cross the street so you don't get yourself this way where you need to navigate that boat. Mark, do you have any ideas?

Mark: Well, I've seen that used as an opportunity to bring a group of managers together and even talk about engagement and define it. Some organizations take the pains to say, "This is what disengaged behavior looks like. This is what engaged behavior looks like. Let's talk about it as a leadership team. Perhaps we can peel back in that relationship between engagement and performance."

You may have people with high engagement who are high performers, which may mean that they're ready for a new assignment and that, in fact, if we think about trends (ph), they might fall back. On the other hand, you might have someone with high engagement that's a poor performer. That may be because there are some barriers in the way of their performance. They're showing up and demonstrating engagement according to the criteria, but they haven't been able to get - they're still on the runaway. That's, I think, where the leader's role of removing barriers, which you alluded to earlier, could be helpful.

On the other side, there could be someone with low engagement and low performance. I suppose that goes to a question that I know I've heard before from some leaders as well. Some employees just won't be happy no matter what you do. Let's take a situation where a leadership team got together and had those discussions and found some people with low engagement and low performance. Is there a particular point where you recommend they pull the plug?

Martha: Actually, I got stopped at something else that you said. We have to be sure not to make the mistake of confusing engagement with happiness. You can have some employees

who are really angry and definitely engaged. I just did some work with a company in San Antonio who's actually on the Best Employers list where they had a whole slew of high performance scores on their Best Employers list.

However, there is a population inside the organization that was really upset and nobody bothered to ask them why. Unfortunately, certain influential managers just jumped to some conclusions that served their own personal purpose, their empire-building purposes, and informed the CEO and Chairman of their conclusions and they were completely wrong.

There was a temptation to discount the reasons for this population's anger when all you had to do was ask them one-on-one, which is what I did, "What's going on," and you find out the truth and you realize, "Oh my gosh, this is the most powerful, most exciting population in the entire company." They're loyal. They're completely attached to the company's outcome. They're upset because of something that can be easily fixed.

Mark: So you're saying they found out the truth about getting the best from people? What a wonderful connection. Just to close that question out, at some point there's a couple of different ways to do it. There's individual one-on-one and it may be advantageous sometimes to have someone from outside the organization do that as you did.

There may be a process where managers and leaders can actually talk about what it looks like in their organization, have a conversation and use that as a way to remove barriers, identify people ready for promotion, perhaps, or another assignment, or really use this as not just how engaged they are, but to really build it into other processes like leadership development and succession planning.

Martha: You also have to be careful who you listen to. Make sure the people who are giving you the truth. You're being told the insight. Make sure that insight is really true of your organization, as opposed to rumor.

Mark: That's a great point. I suppose that's getting data from different points and then as a leadership team or as a leader, try to really look at what that means because no one point today is going to give you everything. I'd

like to thank everyone for listening in and for submitting questions for our discussion. A reminder, you can find Martha's book on Amazon.com and in bookstores everywhere. You can also e-mail her at Martha@MarthaFinney.com if you want to continue this discussion offline.

I'd also like to suggest you put some upcoming broadcasts on your calendar for the New Leader Journeys program with Mark Walztoni. Our next program is Tuesday, May 27th at noon Eastern Time, "Navigate Around the Rocks". It's this whole nautical thing going on.

Martha: And we live in the desert. (Inaudible 56:52).

Mark: Assessment and Alignment Imperatives During the First Thirty Days in a New Role. That was built off An Ounce of Prevention: Building a Foundation for Success in a New Role, which was presented last week. The transcript of that call is available. Just drop me an e-mail at Mark@MarkWalztoni.com. I'd be happy to send that to you with my compliments.

June 10th, we have a broadcast about building positive relationships with your new boss, peers and teams through storytelling. June 24th, Pursue the Goalposts: Achieving Meaningful Results During the First Sixty Days in a New Role. July 15th is (Inaudible 57:35) Team Leader: How to Form, Accelerate and Turn around Virtual and Global Teams. Then July 29th, Sustainability or Rust (ph): Leveraging Early Successes During the First Ninety Days in a New Role.

Martha, you already mentioned your offerings June 4th is David Russo talking with you about holding leaders responsible. Then on June 18th, Dan Walker, the former Chief Talent Officer of Apple on leadership in hair trigger times.

Martha: These two guys are going to be quite the interesting guests.

Mark: Great. Sounds like you won't want to miss it. We will have a downloadable MP3 and transcript from this broadcast on our sites in approximately seven business days. We leave it (inaudible 58:35) and it's something that is great listening for yourself or for your

colleagues.

Again, we want to thank you for joining our program. We invite you to join Martha on her Engagement Journeys With Martha Finney series and continue on our New Leader Journey series. As always, we invite your comments, your questions and your participation. Thank you for your involvement in our learning community. Martha, any final thoughts?

Martha: I am just so excited by this lineup that you've built, Mark, and I think that this is just the beginning of good stuff that you've created. I'm so impressed by what you've done.

Mark: Thanks, everybody. Bye.