



# How to Create a Winning Culture of Engagement

## Intro

**I love the Olympics. I love that Olympic athletes have been toiling away in relative obscurity for much of their lives, training for the ultimate moment. I love seeing them finally get their recognition when their amazing talents are brought into the light for the world to see.**

For Olympic athletes, the quest has never been about money, as most of them never see a dime from their sport. Their drive is simply wanting to be the BEST. And I completely get it.



I've been an amateur athlete my entire life, most recently in an ultra-endurance team sport called Adventure Racing. In Adventure Racing, we never won more money than it took to cover our plane ticket to the race. But over 17 years, my teammates and I completed in more than 40 of these 6-10 day, non-stop, multi-stage, gruel-o-Ramas.

As you can imagine, the question I'm asked most often when I speak to corporate clients about the teamwork and leadership skills we learned from adventure racing is: WHY? (Or really, "Why the hell?").



And the answer is the same as Olympic athletes - Because we were **INSPIRED** to be **GREAT**. To be the best in the world at something. To cross the finish line **WITH** and **FOR** each other.

We have similar challenges in the corporate world. We're always trying to find ways to motivate our employees to greatness. But what if we could tap into the employee's internal **INSPIRATION** instead of relying on external motivation? We often talk about compensation plans....but what about inspiration plans?



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# How to Create a Winning Culture of Engagement

## The Pay Paradox & Ways to Inspire Team Members

### Part 1



### The Pay Paradox

Yes, we all need and love money. But for consistent peak performance, money can't be the sole driving force. You've probably noticed that simply throwing more money and bonuses at people can be a short-term motivator, but not a long-term driver of performance or results. In other words, increased pay is not completely correlated with increased performance.

You probably also noticed that there are certain people in your organization that will never, ever stop striving to be the best they can be, regardless

of whether they see a bonus check or not. They simply want to be great for the sake of being great.

How do we light that kind of fire inside of our team members? I think the Olympians and amateur athletes of the world can offer us a few insights.

### Here are THREE important ways we can INSPIRE our team members:

#### 1. Work With Their "WHY"

As leaders, we have to tap into our team members' "WHY." That's the most powerful and consistent driver of people's action. What inspires each member of your team to come to work and be great every day?

You'll have as many answers as you have people. You might hear, "I need to send my daughter to a great school," others may say, "I'd love to move into leadership someday." For some it might be, "I genuinely care about our customers" or "I just want you to be proud of me and recognize my contributions."

Even if people answer with something related to money, it's rarely, if ever, for money's sake - it's always to buy or do something that's important to them or someone they love. In other words, they need the money to get their WHY.

The more you know about your team members' why, the more creative and powerful your incentive plans can be. Help people get closer to their why through their work, and you'll have a fully engaged employee.



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# How to Create a Winning Culture of Engagement The Pay Paradox & Ways to Inspire Team Members Part 2

## 2. Prepare the Path Forward

Part of what inspired us as kids in school, athletics, art, music, or whatever our chosen endeavor, was the drive to get to “the next level.”

For example, in a sport like gymnastics, you have Levels 1-10 to chase: State Championships, College Titles, and maybe even the World Championships or the Olympics. The drive to get to the next level is inspiring; it proves to us and the world we’re making progress, and it’s a genuine source of pride when we achieve that next milestone.



In order to engage our employees, we can create a similar path forward, with different levels and skills to be achieved, big milestones to celebrate, and lots of recognition along the way. If we build it, they will rise to achieve it.



## 3. Create a Culture of Coaching

Most of us will recall someone special in our lives who believed in us growing up, someone who saw our latent skills and talents, and who helped us achieve success to the best of our abilities.

In the corporate world, leaders are often reticent to play coach and mentor, believing that, as adults, we don’t really need that kind of inspiration. But we do.

Inside every adult is a kid who wants and needs to be recognized, believed in, and inspired to reach our full potential. And just as much as we want a mentor, we also want to share the knowledge we acquire in a leadership role.

Can you imagine what a wonderful world it would be if each person in your organization took someone under their wing and helped them fly? When you create a culture of coaching, in which each employee is inspired to teach, you will not only have more engagement but a truly world-class team of people who will cross the most challenging finish lines not only WITH each, other but FOR each other.



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