

# Curiosity at Work

Your employees' #1 question deserves an objective answer.

**L**"PEOPLE HAVE AN INNATE NEED for self-assessment and objectivity. If they don't get feedback on how they're succeeding, they're not going to be happy."

With that, best-selling author Patrick Lencioni gave me a peek inside his new book, *The Three Signs of a Miserable Job*. He rewarded my curiosity with an even bigger "aha": "There's one question every employee wants answered by his or her boss: 'Am I doing a good job?'"

Then Patrick, who's forgotten more than I'll ever know about motivating people in the business and nonprofit workplace, threw me a curveball for a strike.

"Too often, church and parachurch leaders don't want to think about measurement. There's a reticence about any kind of objective proof that would indicate what they're doing is working."

Nonprofit leaders don't employ objective measures, he said, because it gives others the mistaken impression that you're being mean. After all, no one likes to be the one to tell someone, "You need to do a better job."

"That's a misplaced fear," he said.

Patrick then offered a satisfying alternative. "Vibrant churches and ministry organizations, on the other hand, believe their organization's mission is so important they aren't willing to sacrifice it in order to placate half-hearted employees. And they're not willing to tolerate managers who are unwilling to hold people accountable or utilize objective measures."

**"There's one question every employee wants answered by his or her boss: 'Am I doing a good job?'"**

PATRICK LENCIONI

He illustrated this with a story from the three years he served on the board of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of America. "They hold their volunteers to very high standards because they're serving children and families dealing with life-threatening illnesses. Can you imagine a volunteer saying, 'Oh, I guess I forgot to pick up that child'? It would violate the mission. Because the foundation has such great expectations, volunteer recruits are banging down their doors."

Is it possible to overemphasize achieving bottom-line objectives? Absolutely, especially when an organization's punch list for

employees and/or volunteers crosses the line with unrealistic expectations and demands. Of course, we should never sacrifice treating people compassionately and fairly to achieve a group's measurable objectives at all costs.

We need to give each employee the room to experience God's best. I think back to my first years in business and how I focused on what I could get. After I joined Prison Fellowship, my paradigm changed completely.

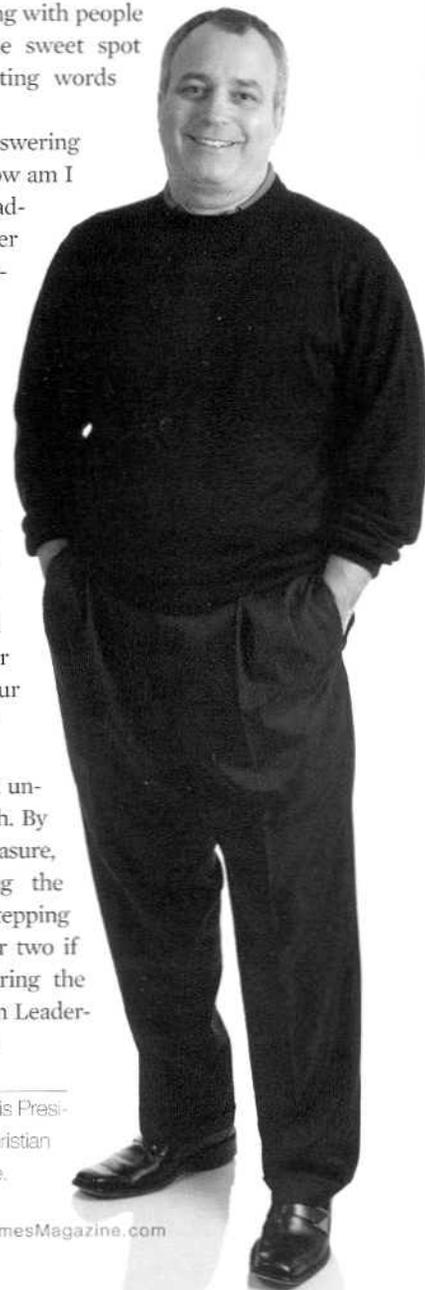
Paul's words in Ephesians 6:7 described my new focus: "Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men." I realized my work had nothing to do with me. Faithfully serving the Lord with excellence became my goal, and I decided I wasn't going to violate it by serving myself.

This issue of OUTCOMES takes a deserving look at the essential role and importance of human resources. Dealing with people was right in the sweet spot of Patrick's parting words to me.

"Instead of answering the question, 'How am I doing?' some leaders would rather succumb to the attitude of 'Don't make waves,' which means we won't challenge each other to be better. If, however, you risk discomfort, you can learn how to work together and bond with each other to advance your ministry's noble mission."

What a great, uncomfortable truth. By any objective measure, I'll keep risking the discomfort of stepping into a pothole or two if it means furthering the work of Christian Leadership Alliance. ●

FRANK LOFARO is President and CEO of Christian Leadership Alliance.



CAROL HUTZLER / CARLHUTZLER.COM