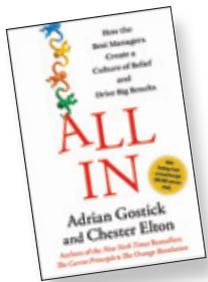
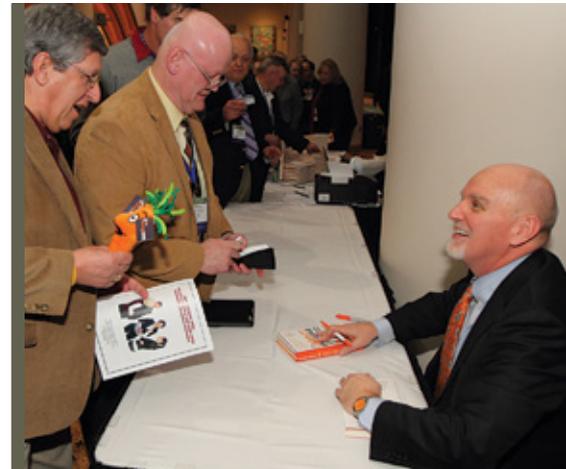


Energize and Educate



Author **Chester Elton** urges school leaders to create a culture that engages all employees



When it comes to motivating employees, it can't be some people some of the time. It has to be all or nothing.

That was the message motivational speaker and author Chester Elton delivered to a packed crowd during his keynote address at the 92nd State Education Convention.

"You've got to get everyone all in. That's the difference between being good and being very good and excellence," Elton said. "In great organizations there is an emotional connection."

During a high-energy presentation that was part church revival, part quiz show, Elton encouraged audience interaction. He threw frisbees and toy carrots (his personal symbol) into the crowd to reward right answers. By the end of his 75 minute talk, he had everyone on their feet shouting "yes!"

Despite the dramatics, Elton's core message was simple and direct: to fully engage employees and ensure a productive environment, you need to energize and educate them in your core message and always, always

find ways to demonstrate your appreciation.

"Trust me, if you do this, you will get to the culture you're aiming for, that excellence, and it's not that hard," Elton said.

He used corporate examples to illustrate his points and began with the Hard Rock Cafe, showing a video of a restaurant dishwasher who so enjoyed his job that he danced and sang at work.

"If your dishwasher gets it, if he's rocking out, then everyone gets it," Elton said, urging his audience to make sure all employees understand the ultimate goal and vision. "Good organizations can tell you how and what they do, great organizations can tell you why."

People also need to know that what they are doing is making a difference, he added. And fostering that "culture of belief" starts at the top.

"Here are the two most important questions to think about today," Elton said. "'Are you all in?' and 'Are your people?' If you can't say yes to the first question, the second doesn't matter. You are the owner of the culture."

Empowering people to do their jobs is also key. Effective leaders inspire their employees and create a positive climate, Elton said.

"Are you highlighting the positive?" he asked. "In every great culture or organization, they root for each other, they cheer for each other."

"That's your job, to get your staff to fall in love with education, to fall in love with those kids in those schools," he added.

One of the most important ways to motivate people is to recognize and reward positive behavior.

"We treat people like VIPs and what's the trickle down?" Elton questioned. "They treat other people like VIPs."

Praise should be sincere, specific and immediate, said Elton who shared 52 ideas for showing appreciation. He challenged the audience to start by sending three handwritten notes thanking people for a specific action per week for the next three weeks.

"I'm telling you, they will cherish them," he said. "It may be a little hard but the results will be worth it." ■

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