

## World-renowned HR expert shares lifetime of insights

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EMC business - Whether you are a prospective employee or a prospective employer, Dr. Denis Cauvier - a world renowned authority on hiring practices - has a lot to share on human nature, motivation, and money.

"The first week on the job is critical to set the tone, for both the employer and employee," Cauvier said. "It's about reciprocity, just as you are keen to give a good impression, the company needs to be the same."

Cauvier is a professional speaker appearing before audiences in 47 countries - far more than his peers in Canada and abroad - and has saved companies millions of dollars in human resources (HR) along the way. He is an international bestselling author of eight books with over one million copies sold.

An expert who has appeared in America's top newspapers and television shows, the Ottawa Valley resident is a pioneer on a philosophy that encourages clients to invest wisely in HR. He maintains that doing so will reduce the time and cost of hiring, increase productivity levels, reduce employee turnover, enhance customer satisfaction, improve sales, and increase profit.

### INFANCY OF MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKING

It all makes for great selling points to prospective clients today, not so much in the late 1980s, before the term "motivational speaker" was coined, when he was young man struggling to advise business leaders.

Back then they doubted he had the experience to teach anything. Cauvier knew he had some convincing to do, beyond pointing to his business degree. So he turned the question back on his audience, asking them how many workers they've hired.

Turns out none had his experience in hiring hundreds of people, despite their many years in business. General experience was no match for specific experience.

That's the kind of insights Cauvier uses when discussing the art of business. At other times he relies on his general experience. Over the course of a fascinating career, Cauvier has:

- worked in the middle of the savannah in mud huts with no electricity as an economic development consultant to an African king,
- facilitated strategic planning sessions with an Arabian sheikh,
- flown on a \$60-million private jet for several days exploring the concepts of business success and financial freedom with Paul Orfalea, founder of Kinkos,
- sat with First Lady Hazel Manning at St. Ann's, the official residence of the prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago, discussing leadership and youth self-esteem issues,
- led a paintball team in a jungle as part of a CEO leadership retreat in the Philippines.

/Another example of specific experience has to do with confidence. The truism that says "hire for attitude and train for competence" more or less holds up for him. Crucial to that attitude, though, especially for younger less experienced people, is confidence.

Cauvier tells the story of one of his first jobs. He convinced the boss to let him work the first week for free. If the boss found him indispensable, he would be hired. If not, they'll go separate ways.

Cauvier doesn't advocate doing something for nothing - the employer had a moral obligation to hire him if he proved himself competent - but that often the more creative, aggressive job seekers are the ones that get ahead.

How he knew to put the offer in is something Cauvier can't explain.

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*Derek Dunn, Metroland*

A world leader in human resources, professional speaker Denis Cauvier says a cup of coffee can be more than a cup of coffee. It can reflect a company's core values, the values of its employees, affect ethical issues such as fair trade practices each of us wrestles with, and solidify a base of loyal customers.

"I just had the gumption to ask," he said. "I was reasonably bold and self-confident, and I've always sought the freedom of being an entrepreneur."

Bold, yes, but he didn't allow hubris to creep into those early years. He was fortunate enough to find two mentors and to hear what they had to share.

Gradually a pattern started to form. Cauvier would speak for free to chambers of commerce and other groups. He would get paid gigs from participants afterward, which meant the speaking engagements doubled as sales and marketing. His speaking notes and talks with business leaders would end up in his books, which he would hock at future speaking engagements. And the circle would continue.

The point being that a business - Cauvier owns three businesses - can make money in many ways, even by starting out in a very indirect way.

For 23 years Cauvier's made a living doing what he loves.

#### MORE THAN A CUP OF COFFEE

Cauvier is often called in when high staff turnover and other measures have reached a critical level. The problem for many managers and others near the top of the company is the inability to see the big picture. They struggle with day-to-day operations and boosting revenue to cover costs being sucked out the back door.

He insists a company has to create and stick to its vision, mission statement and other policies. That will build brand recognition and attract a solid customer basis.

A favourite example is Starbucks. The company sells coffee, sure, but it also sells an experience.

"Its core values are your core values," he said of customers. "They are really practicing what they preach."

Starbucks appeals to young, ethical-purchasing consumers through its fair-trade coffee beans. But it does much more. The baristas are young, interested in the arts, highly educated and travel extensively. In short, a mirror image of the customer. Neither minds paying a lot for a quality cup of coffee.

"Your core values should be a brand extension," he said. "Because like-minded people will come."

Those are companies using best practices. A large Alberta-based meat production plant was using worst practices before Cauvier stepped in.

The province was experiencing a significant labour shortage in 2007 (Tim Hortons paid \$13.75 per hour). The meat packing industry works on razor sharp profit margins. But with a 68 per cent turnover - 548 employees out of 800 - revenue was evaporating. It cost \$2,248 to train and ready a worker, which translated to \$1.3 million in losses.

"They said 'Help.'"

Cauvier did the reach and found out 90 per cent of the turnover happened in the first 30 days on the job. Morale was horrible, too, thanks to policies such as promoting within based on tenure - not on merit or willingness to become managers.

The welcome committee consisted of a safety policies movie and an operations book to study. The company was failing to reciprocate, and employees were taking note.

Cauvier convinced the company to institute a vetting process for promotions, training programs for supervisors, new job descriptions and standards, and a guarantee that the past would remain in the past. A year later, in 2008, turnover was at 11 per cent. Losses totalled just \$200,000.

"They were very happy. Absenteeism was down, safety was up. Morale was up," he said. "It's humane resources, not inhuman resources."

He added that many people spend more time with co-workers than family members. It's important to be firm on issues, not on people.

#### YOUNG PRESIDENTS ORGANIZATION

It's been a long journey for Cauvier. When he was starting out in the business world, human resources issues were "looked down on." It was a division for loyal employees, a reward, a pastureland. Now it is taught in universities and has proven to better the bottom line. There is a respect for the theories and practices around HR. And Cauvier is among those who brought about the change. Among the most prestigious business groups in the world is the Young Presidents Organization, with a membership of 19,000 worldwide. Only CEOs of companies with \$50 million can apply.

To speak before the group is analogous to a politician speaking before the United Nations general assembly. When they invited Cauvier, they said he was the top expert on human resources on the planet right now.

"Just to do a chapter event in Ottawa would have been an honour. But the global leadership Summit? A little lad from Arnprior?" he said. "For this organization to come calling - it was a big deal for me."