

INNOVATORS



the best
MOTIVATORS



**WE SPOKE
WITH LEADERS
OF EIGHT
SUCCESSFUL
COMPANIES
TO FIND OUT
THEIR SECRETS
FOR
GALVANIZING
THEIR STAFFS,
CLIENTS
AND EVEN
THEMSELVES.
GET READY
TO BE INSPIRED.**

By Jennifer Wang

Why is it that entrepreneurship, a path with a high rate of failure that guarantees little in the way of money or fame, attracts so many talented, ambitious individuals? Perhaps it has something to do with what Daniel H. Pink posits in *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*—that the joy of performing an engaging task can be its own reward.

“Satisfaction depends not merely on having goals, but on having the right goals,” Pink writes, noting that the most successful companies “stand for something and contribute to the world.” *Entrepreneur* spoke to chief executives at high-performing companies about motivation—how to inspire it, how to sustain it and how it leads to success. Here’s what they had to say. >>>

IN BUSINESS

ED BROWN

CEO,
PATRÓN SPIRITS
COMPANY

Before Brown took over as Patrón's president and CEO in 2003, the Las Vegas-based tequila producer was more about cantina margaritas than sophisticated cocktails at high-end bars. Now the company has grown to about 1,700 employees and gained fame for its epic events and marketing campaigns, which have raised consumer perception of the brand as a high-quality tequila. "Everything has changed," says Brown, who also races cars for Patrón on the professional circuit. "In the early days, I worked on making sure the brand was profitable for everyone, and now we are the single most profitable brand for our distributors."

ON A HAPPY STAFF:

You have to make sure people enjoy coming to work. Without the employees, Patrón would never be what it is, so I tell them, "If you don't absolutely love it, it's time to leave." If I'm not thrilled, it'll be time to sell and move on.

ON EFFECTIVE MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES:

It's all about an environment that makes employees feel like family. Lunch is catered every day; I built a church at the distillery because some employees were religious. My whole executive team has never worked in the same building because I felt it was more important that they were where their families were, and if everyone had a happy home life, that would mean a beautiful work life. I also ask employees to multitask, which is important to keep them from getting bored and stuck in a rut—my assistant started as a receptionist, and I have her doing marketing now.

MARSHA FIRESTONE PRESIDENT, WOMEN PRESIDENTS' ORGANIZATION

Firestone started the WPO in 1997 in New York City, after noticing a lack of peer groups for women who'd achieved the highest levels of success. She left her post as vice president with the American Women's Economic Corporation to form the organization, which now runs 112 chapters on six continents. (New chapters launched this year in Turkey, Mexico, Australia and New Zealand.) There are three membership levels based on minimum annual company revenue: Regular (\$1 million for service; \$2 million for product), Platinum (\$10 million) and Zenith (\$50 million). Firestone notes that the average revenue of all members was \$7 million in the early years, but now a full quarter of the membership boasts at least \$10 million.

ON EMPOWERING MEMBERS:

We have groups with a maximum size of 20 and pay and train facilitators whose job is to get teams to share what they're working on, get exposed to new ideas and encourage each other to make commitments—and report back to the chapter when they've done it. We create accountability and provide role models. And members also get a say in what they want to learn.

ON MOTIVATING HER OWN TEAM:

I have a roundtable in my office, and I get all parties involved in decision-making and action items and meet as needed so everyone knows what they're going to be working on. But I'm not someone who stands over employees and says, "Did you do it?" If you hire well and people have a sense of pride in what they're doing, that's a great motivator.



IAN CARR & RENÉ GROSS KÆRSKOV

CO-CEOs,
HIRSCHE
BEDNER
ASSOCIATES



After revenue dropped a worrying 25 percent between 2008 and 2010, Carr and Kærskov were tasked with getting Los Angeles-based hospitality design firm HBA back on track. By the end of 2012, sales had increased 65 percent to \$91 million (the highest ever), and staff count had doubled to more than 1,000. The solution was a partnership-focused strategy in which the company launched new brands and expanded aggressively anywhere in the world that would facilitate local clientele.

HBA is now up to 16 offices, four of which opened in the last three years. "Where other people might be reluctant to expand, we speed it up," Kærskov says. "We are approaching our 50th anniversary," Carr adds, "and we are still a future-looking operation."

ON THE INFLUENCE OF A CO-MANAGER:

Carr: We came from different backgrounds—I was a designer in Asia, and René was the CFO—but combining our complementary skills has led to synergy.

Motivation is a relentless task, and by having dual roles, René reminds and reinforces me to never let go of that drive.

ON DRIVE:

Kærskov: We have a roll-up-your-sleeves meritocracy, and we dive in and do the work so everyone can see we are in the trenches, there in the late evenings and in all the major client meetings. And we aren't afraid of competition; competition pushes you to be better. The guy next to you, the other firm—you've got to do better than he can.

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DANIEL
LUBETZKY

CEO,
KIND HEALTHY
SNACKS

Lubetzky has always been determined to build “not only for profit” businesses, beginning with Peaceworks, a food company he founded in 1994 to foster joint ventures between Arabs and Israelis. That was the forerunner to Kind Healthy Snacks, launched in 2004, which sells minimally processed, gluten-free snack bars and other food products and has a strong philanthropic focus. The 180-person New York City-based operation expects to sell about 200 million units this year.

ON STAFF ENGAGEMENT:

I don't know every one of my team members anymore, so it's important that everyone in the company is a shareholder, from entry level to president, and they understand they're doing this for themselves as well as others. It's important to remind people of the company values, because when those are aligned, you create an atmosphere where everyone is building together. Nothing compares to that.

ON PERSONAL GROWTH:

You can't get everybody to give the best of themselves unless you understand what drives each individual and what they care about the most. They know I want them to make more money, but the last few years we've been better about finding ways to provide personal growth and holistic fulfillment.



MATT URMY

CEO,
ARTIST GROWTH

In 2010 Urmly started developing the app that would become Artist Growth, which provides a scheduling and data-management platform for independent musicians and managers. Since then, the six-person Nashville, Tenn., technology startup has won over the music industry with partnerships like SoundHealthcare, which helps artists enroll in and understand healthcare plans.

A former touring artist himself, Urmly admits that as a person who values creative passion, having a business once seemed "like Kryptonite." But when his son was born in 2006, he got a day job designing electronic data-capture systems for clinical research projects; back on tour a few years later, he found himself wishing for a similar tool to control and track information.

More than 10,000 artists have signed on to Artist Growth, including marquee acts like Kings of Leon and Ke\$ha, and the company has scored enterprise deals with major agencies like Red Light Management and Vector Management.

ON TECHNOPHOBES:

Motivating an indie artist is really about education. We help them understand that they can achieve their goals if they apply a small set of best practices. We focus on how we understand their desire to be creative and to not be distracted from that, and [at the same time we] convince them that this is the direction the industry is headed, and if they want to keep up, they're going to have to be able to engage with technology.

ON SELF-MOTIVATION:

On any given day I'm dealing with people who have different interests, and it's a challenge to wear all the hats and dive in and out of those conversations, and also manage the team and keep on track and deliver on time. It's difficult keeping up the intensity, but I'm motivated by a mission to build technology that helps stabilize the music industry and make it healthier.



**LIZANNE
FALSETTO**
CEO,
THINKTHIN

A former model, Falsetto started what would become thinkThin out of her kitchen, concocting her own recipes for travel-friendly nutrition bars, including the bestselling thinkThin Creamy Peanut Butter bar (\$1.99), which contains 20 grams of protein and no sugar.

After sharing her products with friends, she realized she'd stumbled onto a "white space" in the market and founded her Santa Monica, Calif., company in 1999. Annual revenue is now estimated at \$70 million, and the company tops the weight-management category in the billion-dollar bar market. With 50 employees, plus more than 300 sales reps and consultants in the field, thinkThin is in the midst of expanding into different food categories that will further establish the company as a lifestyle brand. Earlier this year Divine, a healthful alternative to a candy bar, hit store shelves, and a new high-

fiber product was introduced in August.

ON LAUNCHING NEW PRODUCTS:

The best way is to open it up, put it in front of [potential customers] and say, "Try this." If it's good and they get the concept, they'll like it.

ON TEAMWORK:

From the beginning, I really try to listen to what people have to say and include them in decisions. I constantly try to bring the team together with brainstorming and think tanks and fun group trips.

ON INSPIRING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS:

It's something that motivates me personally. I want to promote mentorship and bonds between women and empower women entrepreneurs with the fact that if you have an idea, you can do it if you believe in it enough.

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As the name suggests, Los Angeles-based marketing agency David&Goliath embraces a “challenger mindset.” Founded by Angelo 14 years ago, the company has created notable work for clients like Kia Motors, NFL Media, the California State Lottery and Universal Studios Hollywood. But even with all that success, Angelo is constantly thinking up ways for his 150 employees to challenge their “daily Goliaths.” Internal programs like The Defiance Club—which sent one employee to the Philippines to document his experience building dwellings for the homeless (he had requested help overcoming his “selfishness”)—align with Angelo’s marketing strategy of open and honest messaging. “People who can craft the best connections and stories, and who use a mindset as a source of inspiration and conversation, are going to be the ones that prevail,” he says.

ON HOW COMPANY CULTURE CAN SPUR GROWTH:

Before you can ask clients to live their brand, you have to lead by example. Unless you are willing to own it, consumers won’t believe in you. From our advertising to the articles I write, we embrace our “brave” philosophy so everyone knows what we stand for. It gives us a clear path to realizing our potential.

ON INSPIRING CLIENTS TO CHANGE:

Everyone wants results, but clients often don’t want to go through what it takes to change the way they think. We sit down and help them crystallize who they are and what they stand for, and we show how other brands—and our own—have been brave enough to take on challenges, and what the rewards are.

ON KNOWING WHEN TO MOVE ON:

When I interview potential employees or vendors or clients, I always tell them we are not for everyone. I can’t motivate someone who is lazy or evil. Relationships require casting the right people, those who share the same mindset. Only then can you create something great.

**DAVID
ANGELO**
CHIEF CREATIVE
OFFICER,
DAVID&GOLIATH



**BRENT
GLEESON**
CHIEF MARKETING
OFFICER,
INTERNATIONAL
MARKETING INC.

San Diego-based digital marketing agency IMI is the second company started by Gleeson, who served as a Navy SEAL before setting his sights on the business world in 2005 with NewCondosOnline.com, a real-estate search engine he founded with business partner Brandon Fishman. That same year, as the housing market took a turn for the worse, they diversified into digital marketing. That's when things *really* took off: IMI has doubled in size every year since 2007, with projected 2013 revenue of \$25 million. With a staff of 65-plus already, Gleeson is constantly recruiting talent from bigger-name agencies and beating them out for enterprise accounts, including the likes of Belkin, Polycom, Time Life and a major credit card company.

ON CREATING OPPORTUNITIES:

Brandon and I both have finance and economics backgrounds, and we always keep an eye on opportunities. When we saw what was going on in the market, we thought about alternative services we could offer. We'd learned a lot about SEO and driving traffic to our site, which had helped us become digital marketing experts. So we started IMI as a small agency for clients we already had, and kept expanding from there.

ON KEEPING EMPLOYEES INSPIRED:

Obviously, my background as a SEAL is something I use to motivate myself, but the most difficult thing about motivation is consistency. People won't come to work motivated every day, so you have to do different things because everybody responds to different motivators. Maybe it's letting someone speak at a trade show, or offering a flexible schedule or having a fitness-oriented culture.

Our philosophy on motivation is not about running around being like Tony Robbins. First of all, we recruit the right types of people that fit our culture, but one thing that motivates is providing employees with resources for learning and professional development. As the owners, Brandon and I set guidelines for strategic direction, but we try to let employees be entrepreneurial within IMI. Directors have their own budgets, allowing them to be creative and drive their own business. And we do knowledge shares, where employees present new topics to others.

ON ATTRACTING CLIENTS:

We do a damn good job. We want to create business partnerships, and they know we care. When we pitch someone, we talk about creating opportunity for everyone, to create jobs. I think we motivate clients by creating a personal connection. We win when we pitch based on passion and performance. **E**

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