

New 12 New Jersey  
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Interview – John Picard and Marlene Waldock

MARLENE WALDOCK, HOST: Joining me now on this show is John Picard, whose company is Picard & Company, based in Murray Hill, New Jersey. Picard & Company; tell us exactly what you do.

JOHN PICARD: We are a strategic marketing organization focused on two things; one, helping clients grow and improve businesses, and two, extending and deepening their customer relationships so they get more value and more opportunity out of the relationships they already have.

WALDOCK: What size businesses do you work with? Is it across the board, large and small, big corporations? What are you really focusing on?

PICARD: The answer is, we work with a core of middle-market businesses, as well as small businesses and profit centers of large organizations. We cover the gamut. The most important criteria usually is a sense and a focus on change; some critical aspect of their environment or their relationships that needs to get to the next stage.

WALDOCK: Can you define the difference between sales and marketing?

PICARD: Sales is the hand-to-hand, it's that handshake that you make and all the steps in moving from the initial awareness, right on through the completion and the satisfaction.

WALDOCK: What did you say to me earlier? That's what you want...this handshake.  
(Picard/Waldock shake hands)

PICARD: That's the only moment in time that counts. Everything else works out from that moment. And, in fact, our whole philosophy about businesses in general, is that moment; extended through the whole relationship, is the true opportunity. These relationships are the most important asset of any company...these client and prospect relationships are the most important resource of every business.

WALDOCK: Why is it that people have such a difficult time understanding that it's about a relationship?

PICARD: Because they don't make the logical leap that they would if they were dating, or talking to family members. The sense that it's organic and real and is about connections. And those things that you would do in those personal situations can be applied; businesses are organic. They're the sum of the people. And if you remember that, then you're making the sum of the people connect to the sum of your clients and prospects.

WALDOCK: What are the mistakes that they are making? What do they need to be doing?

PICARD: First thing they need to do is, listen. They need to have that dialogue. They need to figure out what they're being told from the market, and to learn from the lessons that they're hearing. My father used to tell me, "Listen louder, listen louder" when I wasn't necessarily engaged in what he was trying to teach me. He would do it jokingly. I still hear that voice when I talk to a client now. And I teach clients that if they listen louder, in fact, they're going to get more business. Another mistake is that they don't develop one message that's directed at that client. So they'll have a piece of marketing, they'll have a brochure, they'll have a pretty picture or a website, but it's not a single, coordinated message, and it's not focused on the customer.

WALDOCK: Focus. A big issue is focus.

PICARD: Absolutely, define yourself, define your message, define your product. So many people say 'I'm going to try and make my marketing adapt to me...the business.' It's the wrong place to start. Your business, your core resource, is the customer. Every business starts with a dream. And it's full of people, each of whom has their own mission. And when you get back to those critical issues, then you can get past all the performance and the crisis, and the day-to-day, you can look at the big picture and purpose. And I think that's a critical issue for right now and for business. If you're going to get more return on your investment, then that's what you've got to do. You've got to focus on the reason you're there. You've got to draw back to your original strengths, and remember why you were there in the first place.

PICARD: Relationships are the sum of all the touch points. My experience with you, the company, that is selling to me. It's the accounting, the marketing, the billing, the servicing, what happens when you call them on the phone, in addition to the websites, and the brochures, and all the other stuff that is traditionally thought of as marketing.

WALDOCK: But in this time and place, and where we are in the economy, people want to do business with people they know and trust.

PICARD: There's nothing more important than that. Well, actually there are two forms of trust: developing the trust and then maintaining and fulfilling the promises. You get it by understanding... listening, as we just talked about. You get it by connecting what you do to what's needed. And you get it by continually communicating along the way. You know, many people will start the sale, they'll close, they'll make that handshake, and they think their job is done. And that's just the beginning. It's also getting relationships that extend beyond that into other relationships. How many times does a new business really grow and succeed by the relationship and networks of the people they have as current customers?

WALDOCK: Well, you call yourself a relationship architect. You help companies understand where the relationships need to be.

PICARD: I think businesses, which we mentioned earlier, are organic. There's a wonderful model that's a parallel for this, and that is that in contemporary medicine, there's a wellness model. So instead of thinking of yourself as a surgeon in the traditional medical model, these are people who are trying to optimize health. I'm in the business of optimizing the health of the growth of the company.

WALDOCK: And people expect it to be immediate and it's not immediate. It's just not going to happen that way. It's a sustained effort.

PICARD: Absolutely. And it builds on itself, with momentum. There are several presidential elections that were built on the idea of momentum. And that's true in business as well.

WALDOCK: You have something that is called a Velocity Index. What is Market Velocity Index, what does that do? That's a measurement tool?

PICARD: It's an analysis that says you have lots of stuff that you're doing all at the same time. At different times and with different audiences each element will be more or less helpful to your getting a return on that investment, and to getting you where you need to go as a business; to get to that next stage. We look at the different pieces, we weigh them and we see what's working. We keep it strategic. And in fact we're developing an extension of that, which is called

Relationship ROI.

WALDOCK: When you are going in to revitalize a company, what's the first thing that you do? Where do you start?

PICARD: We look at that original equation. Remember that dream that we just talked about? There is a moment of impact where you make a difference to a customer. We look at that and we build out from there. We look at the dynamics of the relationship and how it leverages that key moment. What's the benefit? Most people think they're selling the product or the service. They don't realize that what they're selling is the benefit. It involves every aspect, from the smallest communication...to the biggest ad...to the personal interaction...to a major event for your company.

WALDOCK: Right.

PICARD: I was listening to an ad on TV, not mine, just something I was watching on TV last night, and my whole family stopped. It was an ad for a battery; it was playing against a bunny commercial. I won't name names. And in the commercial they show a toy that kept running. And then suddenly you saw a close-up of the face of a child, and it had an earpiece and obviously, the child, for the first time, with that battery, was able to hear the sound of rain. That's the moment they were selling. They understood what the battery was contributing. And that's...you can do that with any product, any business, any service. That's that moment. Was there anything with more value? It's like that major credit card commercial, that you know...priceless.

WALDOCK: Collaborative marketing. Collaborative partnering. It's so nice talking to you today, John, thank you.

PICARD: Let me make that handshake. Thank you.