



### **First Niagara “All In”**

*--Bank appears in best-selling book about  
corporate cultures that work—*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – (June 7, 2012) – A story about a moose and a company CEO who really means it when he asks employees to tell him how things are going were enough to give First Niagara Financial Group a place in a book that hit the big time when it was released.

“All In” authors Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton, who penned New York Times best-sellers “The Carrot Principle” and “The Orange Revolution,” talk about First Niagara’s winning culture in a work that promises to shed light on “how the best managers create a culture of belief and drive big results.” Shortly after its release in April, “All In” rose to the number-four spot on the New York Times Book Review and made it to the top of USA Today, Barnes & Noble and Amazon rankings.

First Niagara President and CEO John Koelmel is delighted by the attention the book is bringing to the organization he has led since 2006.

“We have something really special here,” he said. “It’s our people. And they deserve to be recognized for who they are and what they do.”

Elton will be in Buffalo June 20 for a book-signing session at First Niagara’s headquarters at 726 Exchange Street, Buffalo, 14210. He also will be part of an all-day meeting of the company’s cultural ambassadors, which will include awards to the company’s culture educators.

First Niagara, which quadrupled its assets from 2007 to 2011 and nearly quadrupled its number of branches from 2009 to the present, invests heavily in its culture and in ensuring that all team members across its multi-state footprint understand what makes the company special and how they contribute to that goal. With the help of The Culture Works, a global training and consulting firm founded by Gostick and Elton, all team members at First Niagara are educated about the organization’s purpose, vision, personality and values.

In addition, there are culture ambassadors inside the organization and a department of team members dedicated in large part to developing and sustaining the company’s culture, which has been dubbed “We Are First Niagara.” Koelmel and a five-person senior-management team hold regular RAP Sessions with leaders across the company to provide First Niagara updates and listen to team members. Siobhan Smith, senior vice president of Organizational Development, heads up the department that is working to shape the bank’s unique culture.

“John [Koelmel] always says we – not he – are the brand, but the fact is, without his leadership and emphasis upon culture, our culture would not be our differentiator.” she said. “Our culture is one of the things that drew many of us to First Niagara and it certainly is one of the reasons – if not the main reason – we stay and give it our all every day.”

“All In” puts First Niagara in the company of well-known organizations such as American Express, Cigna, Pepsi Bottling and Avis Budget. The authors maintain these firms have succeeded in creating cultures in which employees believe in their leaders and in their company’s value, vision and goals. These “culture[s] of belief” drive results, Gostick and Elton assert. Even in the midst of a global recession, “All In” companies achieved revenues that were three times higher than those without a strong, positive culture

“First Niagara has a special culture, something worth emulating,” said Gostick. “We visit many companies and it was refreshing to find in First Niagara an organization where leaders have found a way to get team members to truly buy in by listening and treating them like true partners. The passion and commitment were evident in every conversation we had. First Niagara focuses on people and is winning with talent. It has the financial results to show that getting culture right really does pay.”

### **About First Niagara**

First Niagara, through its wholly owned subsidiary, First Niagara Bank, N.A., is a multi-state community-oriented bank with nearly 430 branches, approximately \$38 billion in assets, \$29 billion in deposits, and approximately 6,000 employees providing financial services to individuals, families and businesses across Upstate New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Massachusetts. For more information, visit [www.firstniagara.com](http://www.firstniagara.com).

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Contact: Mary Burich  
Corporate Communications  
(716) 819-5926 or (716) 510-0248  
[mary.burich@fnfg.com](mailto:mary.burich@fnfg.com)