

Get Passionate About Your Work & Life *FISH!* Tells The Tale (A Book Review) by Cheryl Eckl, TotalPros Trainer/Coach

Ken Blanchard and his pals really know how to tell a story for maximum impact. First it was *The One Minute Manager*. Then *Who Moved My Cheese?* Now it's *FISH! A Remarkable Way to Boost Morale and Improve Results* by Stephen C. Lundin, Ph.D., Harry Paul and John Christensen (Hyperion, New York, 2000).

Personally, I like *FISH!* the best. Possibly because I heard Harry Paul talk about catching the energy and releasing the potential. But mostly because *FISH!* started out as a movie about real guys who turned a damp, dumpy fish stand into the world famous Pike Place Fish market in Seattle. This is a true success story that later became a parable; not the other way around.

In case you doubt the story, the Pike Place guys really do throw fish through the air. And their customers consistently go away with much more than a good product.

In fact, Pike Place Fish has become a destination for tourists and a place to recharge for residents—the young, the old and the yogurt dudes. All this because owner Johnny Yokoyama and his wacky band of fishmongers decided they had a choice about the way they do their work—even if there was not a choice about the work itself.

It's hard to imagine a more boring job than being a fishmonger. But the fish guys discovered that any job can be boring to the person who does it—unless that person chooses a positive attitude and infuses the job with passion, fun and full concentration.

And so they developed the Fish Philosophy:
Play, Choose Your Attitude, Be Present and Make Their Day.

Of the four steps, Choose Your Attitude is the core. Because if you choose to have a bad day, no one is going to play with you. Only your body will be present. And your dullness could actually ruin some else's day. So the fish guys choose a great attitude—every day—and that attitude sustains them and infects their customers with enthusiasm and belief in their own ability to be passionate about work and life.

This is practical wisdom that works. As the *FISH!* parable draws you into the lives of Lonnie the fish guy, Mary Jane, and the toxic dump gang on the third floor that Mary Jane supervises, you'll likely find yourself thinking of ways your own team can make fish fly—even if you have nothing to throw.

It's not the throwing that matters, of course. It's the amazing commitment to team success in all four aspects of *FISH!* that creates the difference. Even while making a crowd weep with laughter at their antics, the fish guys are fully aware of what is happening around them—always ready to answer a single customer's question or just talk to them about life.

This is masterful chaos by design. As Mary Jane's son says in the story, "Mom, this place rocks!" Imagine your customers saying that about your business. Or you saying it about your life. It could happen—if you create it.

It's easy to apply the Fish Philosophy to creating raving fans, as Ken Blanchard calls them. After all, this is a business book with some terrific best practices. But I like to

read a level deeper and explore the unspoken motto of *FISH!*—We don't serve others well if we don't care for ourselves first.

The fish guys seem to know that effectively choosing a great attitude is more than putting on a happy face. Their enthusiasm comes from the inside out. Customers (especially the kids) can spot a phony. But these guys are the real article.

The dynamic energy is truly infectious—but maintaining a positive attitude means routing out the negatives, not just covering them up. When you read about Wolf, one of the real-life fish guys, or look up the fish guy bios on the Pike Place website, you get the sense that these are people who faced difficult times, made hard decisions and know who they are.

So I take the message of *FISH!* to mean two things:

(1) Treat your customers as the very special people they are and they will return again and again.

- Include them in your Play.
- Share your great Attitude with them.
- Give them your full Attention and Make Their Day.

(2) Treat yourself as well as you treat your customers.

- Don't take yourself too seriously, even as you take your work very seriously.
- If you've forgotten how to Play, borrow a dog or a child and learn again.
- Figure out what it takes to Make Your Day.
- And Be Present with yourself to do it.

Then get ready for some excitement as you unleash the wellspring of your personal power that can send you flying into work you love and life lived passionately.