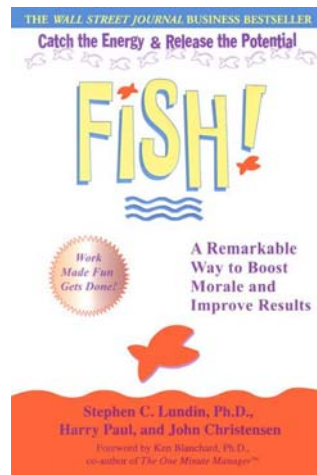


# FISH!

A Remarkable Way to Boost Morale and  
Improve Results



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## The Big Idea

WORK MADE FUN GETS DONE!

In a reality where you may be working at a job that is not exactly ideal, here are ways to learn to love what you do, and make your workplace an energetic, enthusiastic and wonderful place to be. Through the delightful story of fictional characters Mary Jane Ramirez, a manager from First Guarantee Financial, and Lonnie, a fishmonger from Seattle's world famous Pike Place Fish Market, this engaging parable teaches us how to transform a "toxic energy dump" (every company has one) into a workplace that adds value, productivity and profit to the company, thereby creating happier workers, employers, and customers!

### Choose your attitude.

**There is always a choice about the way you do your work, even if there is no choice about the work itself.**

YOUR ATTITUDE MENU FOR THE DAY: ☺ OR ☹. IT'S YOUR CHOICE.

Mary Jane and Dan had moved their family to Seattle, and had only spent less than a year in their new hometown when tragedy struck. Dan died suddenly from a burst aneurysm, forcing Mary Jane to accept a position on the dreaded third floor of First Guarantee Financial because of the salary raise and benefits it would provide her, as she was now a single parent.

The challenge was to transform the company's toxic energy dump, a.k.a. the third floor department, into a staff that the rest of the company could work with effectively. The third floor was the butt of all company jokes, where phone calls would go unanswered, and people could be counted on to rush to the elevators at 4.30 everyday.

Pondering over the problem of the third floor, Mary Jane stumbled upon the Pike Place Fish Market one day during lunch. She immediately noticed the energy, enthusiasm, and interaction the market fishmongers and customers had. She made friends with Lonnie, who promised to help teach her staff the secrets of the success of the Fish market. The first lesson: There is always a choice about the way you do your work, even if there is no choice about the work itself. We can choose the attitude we bring to our work.

Wisdom in a nutshell from the Pike Place Fish Market:

- Have the courage to change.
- Never fear the risk of failure. The risk of doing nothing is greater than the risk of acting.
- Each of us is an artist. Everyday we have a choice to create each day like a work of art. The reason you were born was to leave your own indelible mark on the world. Respect your creative urges. Have faith in yourself. Your choices are as authentic as you are.
- Never stop learning and growing.
- You have within yourself more resources of energy, talent, and strength than you think.
- Concrete steps to take: Call a meeting and speak from the heart, find a message that communicates choosing your attitude in a way that everyone will understand and personalize. Provide motivation, and persist with faith.

LIFE IS TOO PRECIOUS TO BE PASSING THROUGH TO RETIREMENT.

At the Pike Place Fish Market, a character named Wolf was the best example of choosing your attitude. He was once on the road to a career as a professional racecar driver when he had a serious accident. He wallowed in self-pity for a while, but when his girlfriend left him and friends stopped calling, he realized he had an important choice to make. He could choose to live fully, or he could let life slip away in a series of missed opportunities. Wolf's story shows us how we can choose our attitude everyday and choose it well.

## **Play!**

**Create an adult playground and have fun. You can be serious about your work without taking yourself too seriously.**

Mary Jane learned this important ingredient when she brought her two kids to the Pike market. In Lonnie's words, here is the essence of the idea: "This is a real business which is run to make a profit. This business pays a lot of salaries, and we take the business seriously, but we discovered we could be serious about business and still have fun with the way we conducted business. We sell a lot of fish. We have low turnover. We enjoy work that can be very tedious. We have become great friends, like the players on a winning team. We have a lot of pride in what we do and the way we do it. And we have become world famous."

## **Make someone's day.**

**Create great memories. The playful way we do our work allows us to find creative ways to engage our customers. Find ways to respectfully include them in the fun.**

Mary Jane observed this in the way customers had fun catching fish thrown by the fishmongers, in the way her son Brad was allowed to help out in the fish storage, doing 'big guy' stuff. Customers like being part of the show.

## **Be present.**

**Focus on the customer in front of you and be tuned in to opportunities to be there for people. This helps in your personal life too!**

How many times have you been kept waiting at a store counter for someone to attend to you, while the clerk finished his phone call or conversation with another salesperson? Being present for your customers says it all. Be alert. Pay attention. Stop daydreaming on the job.

In your family life, how many times have you passed up an opportunity to take your daughter to the park because you were too busy?

Mary Jane realized it wouldn't work to simply tell her staff about the Pike market, they had to see it for themselves.

<b>FIND WAYS TO LET YOUR STAFF DISCOVER THE FISH PHILOSOPHY FOR THEMSELVES.</b>
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After a field trip to the market at lunch, the staff was assigned to think about the four key ingredients she outlined. How would they translate it to their third floor department? How could they create more fun and energy? How could they engage customers in ways that make their day? What can the fishmongers teach us about being present for each other and our customers?

THINGS WON'T GET BETTER UNTIL WE CHOOSE TO MAKE THINGS BETTER.
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The third floor then flew into action. Four teams would make presentations on each of the key ingredients. Each presentation was to have action items for implementation, and teams would be responsible for setting and facilitating their own meetings.

## The Team Reports

### The Play Team

The Play team designed a game using a path of circles cut from colored paper and arranged on the floor so you could step from one circle to the next as the music played. Each circle had written on it a key point from their report. When the music stopped, the person standing on a specific circle would be asked to read the text on it. One group of items was a list of benefits, the other group, a list of implementation ideas.

#### Benefits of play:

- Happy people treat others well.
- Fun leads to creativity.
- The time passes quickly.
- Having a good time is healthy.
- Work becomes a reward and not just a way to rewards.

#### Implementing Play on the third floor:

- Post signs saying, "This is a playground. Watch out for adult children."
- Start a joke-of-the-month contest with its own bulletin board.
- Add more color and make the environment more interesting.
- Add more life with plants and an aquarium.
- Special events such as a lunchtime comedian.
- Small lights to turn on when it is time to lighten up a bit or when you have a good idea.
- Instruction in creativity.
- A designated creativity area called the Sand Box.
- Form an ongoing play committee to keep the ideas flowing.

### The Make Their Day Team

The Make Their Day Team presented the results of the third floor's customer survey:

- Our customers dread working with us. They call us "the sleepwalkers".
- The work we do is adequate, but we rarely offer to extend ourselves in order to help them serve the external customer. We do our job, period, and no more.
- We often treat customers as if they are interrupting us.
- We frequently pass our customers around from one person to another without ever conveying an interest in solving the problem. We appear to be attempting to avoid responsibility.
- Our customers joke about our response, or lack thereof, to a problem that arises after 4. They laugh about the stampede to the elevator at 4.30.
- Our customers question our very commitment to the enterprise.
- We are referred to as the "last stage of decline".
- Discussions have started concerning the possibility of replacing our department with an outside contractor.

The Make Their Day Team then asked each group to list as many ideas as possible for Making Their Day, with a member of the reporting team serving as the scribe. This was the winning Summary report:

#### Benefits of Make Their Day

- It is good for business.
- Serving our customers well will give us the satisfaction that comes to those who serve others. It will focus our attention away from our problems onto how we can make a positive difference to others. This is healthy, it will feel good, and will unleash even more energy.

#### Implementing Make Their Day

- Stagger our hours so there is coverage from 7am to 6 pm. This will be good for our customers and may also be helpful to some of us who need different start times.
- Pull together some focus groups to study ways we can be of service to our customers. Should we have specialty groups, for instance, focusing on specific customer categories?
- Have a monthly and an annual award for service, based on the recommendation of our customers who said their day had been made.
- Implement a 360-degree feedback process which includes our customers.
- Appoint a special task force dedicated to surprising and delighting our customers.
- Ask our key customers to “come out and play” once a month.
- Study what it would take to implement the “moment of truth” idea, which started at SAS, Scandinavian Airlines. We would try to make every transaction with our customers a positive transaction.

#### The Present Moment Team

The members of the team related personal stories on the importance of being present for people. Soothing, relaxing music played in the background. John spoke of how he passed up many opportunities to take his daughter to the park because he was too busy, Janet described how she was not able to help a co-worker in a past job, resulting in a lost client and the loss of her own job.

Everyone confirmed their commitment to be fully present for one another and their customers. There would never again be unfocused behavior such as answering e-mails or reading while speaking on the phone with a colleague or customer.

#### The Choose Your Attitude Team

The team report was brief and direct to the point, listing the benefits of choosing your attitude:

- By accepting that you choose your attitude, you demonstrate a level of personal accountability and proactivity that will fill the third floor with energy, all by itself.
- Choosing your attitude and acting like a victim are mutually exclusive.
- We hope the attitude you choose is to bring your best self to work and to love the work you do. We may not be able to do exactly what we love at the present time, but any of us can choose to love what we do. We can bring our best qualities to our work. It is our choice. If we can accomplish this one thing, our work area will become an oasis of energy, flexibility, and creativity in a tough industry.

#### Implementing Choosing Your Attitude

- The group distributed copies of “Personal Accountability: The Path To A Rewarding Work Life” to everyone with the intent of conducting discussion groups on the book. Other titles for discussion were Raving Fans, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Gung Ho!, and The Road Less Traveled.

- The group prepared an Attitude Menu. On one side it said: “Angry, disinterested, bitter” ☹️ and on the other, “Energetic, caring, vital, supportive, creative” 😊. At the top of the menu was written: THE CHOICE IS YOURS.

## One Year Later

Lonnie and Mary Jane are engaged. Mary Jane receives the Chairwoman’s Award for her work on the third floor, which she shares with members of the Pike Market, her staff, and with Lonnie.

At the entrance of the headquarters building of First Guarantee, the ingredients of transformation are inscribed on a plaque as follows:

### Our Workplace

As you enter this place of work please choose to make today a great day. Your colleagues, customers, team members, and you yourself will be thankful. Find ways to play. We can be serious about our work without being serious about ourselves. Stay focused in order to be present when your customers and team members most need you. And should you feel your energy lapsing, try this surefire remedy: Find someone who needs a helping hand, a word of support, or a good ear – and make their day.

## Meaning

Mary Jane opened her journal to one of her favorite selections, a piece written by John Gardner:

Meaning is not something you stumble across, like the answer to a riddle or the prize in a treasure hunt. Meaning is something you build into your life. You build it out of your own past, out of your affections and loyalties, out of the experience of humankind as it is passed on to you, out of your own talent and understanding, out of the things you believe in, out of the things and people you love, out of the values for which you are willing to sacrifice something. The ingredients are there. You are the only one who can put them together into that pattern that will be your life. Let it be a life that has dignity and meaning for you. If it does, then the particular balance of success or failure is of less account.