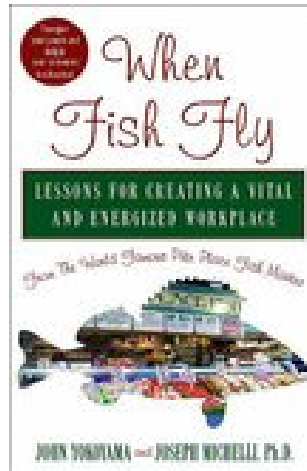


When Fish Fly

Lessons for Creating a Vital and Energized Workplace from the World Famous Pike Place Fish Market



Authors: John Yokoyama and Joseph Michelli, Ph.D.

Publisher: Hyperion Books

Date of Publication: 2004

ISBN: 97-8140-130-061-6

176 pages

About the Authors:

John Yokoyama is the owner of the World Famous Pike Place Fish Market. John's love of fish began as a child fishing with his father on Puget Sound. He learned the retailing business by working at his father's produce stand in the Pike Place Farmer's Market. He purchased Pike Place Fish in 1965 to help make his car payments - amazing how things turned out! He lives in Seattle.

Joseph A. Michelli, Ph.D., is a best-selling author, world-renowned speaker, organizational psychologist, and business consultant. He has been described as having the ability to "catch what is right in the world and playfully spark people and businesses to grow toward the extraordinary." Dr Michelli is famous for his books about enduring business principles and his keynote presentations which demonstrate these principles, legendary customer service strategies, and employee empowerment and innovation approaches.

■ The Big Idea

People come from far and wide to the World Famous Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle, not only to witness the hilarious spectacle of fishmongers throwing slippery salmon to one another, but also to share in the joyous atmosphere generated by the company's uniquely vital culture.

Pike Place Fish was not always World Famous, however. In this remarkable business-advice book, owner John Yokoyama tells the story of how he transformed a small company on the verge of bankruptcy into an extraordinary model of success. It all began with a vision: By declaring themselves "World Famous" (before it became a reality), Yokoyama and his employees made a conscious decision not just to seek fame but to make a positive difference every day in the lives of each of their customers, suppliers, and colleagues.

<http://www.whenfishfly.com/authors.html>

■ Why You Need This Book

This book offers stakeholders – owners, managers, and front-line workers alike – strategies for achieving world-famous results in any kind of business by developing a culture that leads to excellent customer service, legendary employee morale, and a fun and energized work environment.

After all, if Pike Place Fish can make a world famous difference from a small storefront, with zero advertising, in a smelly, physically challenging profession, then the same is possible for any company.

■ Creating a Vision of Power and Possibility

“If you want to build a ship, don’t
drum up the men to gather up the
wood, divide the work and give
orders. Instead, teach them to yearn
for the vast and endless sea.”

- ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPERY

With the declaration of “World Famous Pike Place Fish”, the company evolved from one that existed totally to sell fish to one that was interested in extraordinary service to its customers and its world. Merely selling fish was no longer the main reason it was open for business.

Its vision is large enough and clear enough that it guides the company’s staff in day-to-day operations. It generates a more meaningful reality for all of the employees, who are not simply fish salespeople; they are agents of change. Anyone can sell fish – few can make a world-famous difference while doing it.

A purposeful vision has power like nothing else – breakthroughs happen as a result. Looking past the everyday demands of the bottom line, every employee continually seeks to love the company’s vision, World Famous Pike Place Fish. For them, the vision is the bottom line. If World Famous Pike Place Fish is present through them, all else falls into place.

THREE PLEDGES OF AN OWNER

It is very clear to John Yokoyama what World Famous Pike Place Fish means. From his perspective as the company’s owner, he aims to:

1. Make a world famous difference in the lives of everyone who comes into his business;
2. Empower the creative people he works with so that they can make a world famous difference for each other, the customers, the community, and beyond; and

3. Demonstrate what is possible when one empowers one's employees. (Originally, John's desire was to demonstrate this only to small-business owners. These days, he also finds himself sharing these possibilities with executives in large corporations, as well as with organizations and community leaders.)

■ Achieving Individual Commitment and Team Alignment

"Never doubt that a small group of
thoughtful, committed citizens can
change the world; indeed, that is the
only thing that ever has."

- MARGARET MEAD

At Pike Place Fish, people are viewed in a very different way. People are not objects to be motivated or persuaded into action. Fundamentally, people are creative beings and they should be treated as such.

Once the powerful creativity of employees is accepted, you simply need to present the opportunity for them to grow. For the management, that's as simple as creating a new, exciting reality with them.

In a general sense, this is the new reality John offers at Pike Place Fish:

You can come to work and affect the world for the better. You can matter in the lives of others. You can share a powerful vision with our team and create breakthrough success, and yes, you can do all that while throwing and selling fish.

I also affirm that I am devoted to having my business and the people in it make a profound difference.

In essence, my invitation to my employees can be summarized as follows:

We are on a journey, and we have been on this journey for more than fifteen years. We are committed to this, and everybody who works here has personally taken responsibility for participation and for being on this boat.

Committing to working here means you are not just accepting a job. If you take a stand to be on this team, you are declaring that you will make a difference for every customer and have a positive, world famous impact on the world at large. If you say "yes" to working here, you become an owner and creator of this vision. What that means personally for you is that you are World Famous Pike Place Fish. You are generating the whole thing from your place in the universe.

■ Focusing on the Process for Achieving Success

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves who am I to be bright, brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?"

- NELSON MANDELA

Through management's intention to use World Famous Pike Place Fish as a way to serve other people, and the subsequent process that that declaration called forth, the company's crew has made a difference in people's lives and in the success of the market. They took on a way of relating to the world that has made an impact. They did not strategically set out a plan to bring themselves fame. They didn't hire an ad agency to announce that they were world famous, call CNN, or do anything of that sort. They simply committed to being world-famous, and all their subsequent actions followed from that intention.

The following was once noted succinctly and clearly:

Being is strategy in action. We don't make plans in the usual way. We create intentions and commit to them. We never know how the results are going to show up. So, while it's true that we've intended everything that has happened, the events seemed to come "out of the blue."

Change really happens naturally, just out of who you're being. We keep telling them, your success isn't in doing what we do; it's in discovering your own way. Don't do what we do. You just have to be. That means commit yourself to being who you say you are: act like, think like, look like, feel like, and speak like. Be it!

You will create your own way, and you'll create doing what you do. Our secret to success lies in our commitment to being who we say we are. Just be it.

■ Choosing Powerful Conversations

"Without knowing the force of words, it is impossible to know men.."

- CONFUCIUS

If you get attached to a conversation that says all of the people around you are incompetent, it's likely that you will try to do everything by yourself. When you shift conversations and explore the greatness of your team members, you're likely to be a person who creates opportunities for their strengths to show up on the job.

Sometimes it's not about "doing" more, it's about choosing a conversation that empowers you to make more of a difference.

What conversations are automatic for you? How do you and those with whom you work yield to power-limiting conversations? By stopping automatic, passive, and power-reducing conversations, dynamic and generative forces are unleashed, and these forces drive their success and fuel their ability to make a difference.

Creating deep and powerful conversations works at Pike Place Fish, and powerful conversations have positively transformed the lives of the employees' families as well.

■ Making a Difference by Listening Intently

"When we are listened to, it creates us,
makes us unfold and expand.
Ideas actually grow within us and
come to life."

- BRENDA UELAND

When staff members feel that their manager listens to them, they are more likely to listen to their co-workers as well. Listening gives people access to their creativity and assists them in relating to one another.

When you live your life with a genuine interest and concern for others, it's clear to you when members of your team aren't listening to make a difference. It's easy to coach them and receive coaching from them to make sure that they are listening to one another and to those who come into contact with your business.

If you are going to listen powerfully to your customers, you can't do it in order to make more money. If you do listen for that reason, it is just a form of manipulation. You are going to be listening through the filter of "Come on, say yes." Or, "Come on! You can spend more than that."

When you truly listen to someone, you hold that person in high regard. You see him or her as naturally valuable with something significant to contribute.

Has someone has truly listened to you lately? Do you typically listen to make a difference, or do you usually listen to defend yourself?

It's your choice!

■ Coaching for Greatness

"The greatest good you can do for
another is not to share your riches,
but to reveal to him his own."

- BENJAMIN DISRAELI

Let's look at some conversations that interfere with coaching:

- "It's easier to do it myself."
- "Why should I coach them? They're not going to take it well."
- "What's the use? I've told them this before and it hasn't changed."
- "They have more experience than I do. What do I have to offer them?"

We learned that some of the conversations that get in the way of listening to each other include the following:

- "I don't want to change. I like things the way they are."
- "I don't like the way you are coaching me, so I am not listening."
- "I already know how to do it."
- "Before I do what you ask, tell me why."

When it comes to coaching, Pike Place Fish is a strange place. It's odd to see a corporate culture where feedback is so readily given and so graciously received.

Defensiveness and resistance to change have melted away, and people see coaching as an opportunity for growth.

As a result, things get done better than ever before, and the Pike Place people are at their creative best.

The success of the company's coaching starts with the staff's intention to make a world-famous difference and their commitment to care enough to consistently share supportive, compassionate comments and ideas with one another.

While unusual, their culture is available to any workplace. It's just a conversation away.

■ Taking a Stand

“You are not here merely to make a living. You are here to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, and with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world. You impoverish yourself if you forget this errand.”

- WOODROW WILSON

While it is difficult to separate out the key components behind any company’s success, the following elements are behind Pike Place Fish’s success:

1. Creating a vision of power and possibility as a team
2. Enrolling and formalizing individual commitment and team alignment to the vision
3. Helping team members distinguish between the state of being and the state of doing
4. Having the leadership redefine themselves as effective agents of change
5. Assisting team members in letting go of internal and external conversations that rob them of their personal power
6. Guiding team members to listen to make a difference instead of listening to defend or blame
7. Helping the crew live their commitment to one another through effective coaching
8. Assisting crew members as they turn snags into breakthroughs

How empowered, energized, and alive can you make your workplace? How willing are you to have your life truly matter?

If Pike Place Fish can make a world famous difference from a small storefront with zero advertising in a smelly, physically challenging profession, then what’s possible for you, your business, your family, and your community?

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