



**Catch the Energy.
Release the Potential.**

Essential Background
for the Facilitator



Our Story



*It was a dark and stormy night...
A shot rang out...*



nce upon a time there was a cold and dreary little fish market in Seattle. The employees didn't want to be there. Few customers wanted to be there either.

Johnny, the owner, was hard to work for. He lost his temper easily. He came to work each morning dreading the day and left each night exhausted and unhappy. One day Johnny looked in the mirror (metaphorically speaking) and realized he needed to change.

In the past Johnny had always just demanded results. But this time was different. He decided to ask his employees, "What do you want our workplace to be? What do we want it to be?" The fishmongers were amazed. No one had ever invited them to help create the workplace they wanted.

Then the littlest fishmonger, who was too young to know better, said, "Why don't we become world famous?" They all hesitated for a moment. Then everyone said, "Why not?" It was sheer inspiration.

All of them, Johnny included, committed to being world famous. Each fishmonger was free to live this vision in their own way. They agreed to coach each other, to help each other stay focused on their commitment. Johnny was coached like everybody else, even by the newest employee.

The fishmongers soon learned that they acted differently when they were "being" world famous. There was no textbook or manual. They just knew the right thing to do at the right time. Things started to change . . .



Meanwhile, John, a young prince from a faraway land (actually he is a documentary filmmaker from Minnesota with a receding hairline, but he is a prince of a guy) was with his noble knight, Steve Lundin, on an island near Seattle. They were filming David Whyte, a wise prophet and business thinker who spoke to organizations about bringing our whole selves to work.

John, who was a cheap prince, spent the weekend in Seattle to save a few bucks on airfare. During his stay, a friendly local suggested he visit the Pike Place Market. As John wandered among the colorful flower and fruit stands, he heard a commotion on the other side of the marketplace.

Like a child drawn to the Pied Piper, he followed the sound to a crowd gathered around a small fish market. He saw crabs and salmon tossed over the counter for wrapping. The crowd cheered each spectacular catch. The employees and customers smiled and laughed. The cash registers rang constantly. And there was joy in the village.

John saw how hard the fishmongers worked to serve people. The market was busy and noisy, with constant distractions, yet when a fishmonger served a customer, it was like they were the only two people in the place.



Selling fish didn't look like this much fun at any of the other fish stands John had passed along the way. What made this place so different, so alive? He noticed a sign above the counter: World Famous Pike Place Fish.

John asked one of the fishmongers, "What's going on here?"

The fishmonger, a wild-haired young man by the name of Shawn,





had a question of his own. "Did you eat lunch today?"

"Yeah," John said, wondering what the fellow was getting at.

"How was the service?"

John shrugged his shoulders. "Okay, I guess."

"Did the waiter connect with you? Or did he just take your money?"

"Connect with me?" John had no idea what this guy was talking about.

Shawn looked John in the eye. "This is our moment together, yours and mine. How may I serve you?"

John remembered something David Whyte said: "We spend more time at work than we do with our family or friends. Yet we leave much of our passion, energy and creativity at home. If we can't bring the best of ourselves to our work, we're saying it's OK to be unhappy, bored or resigned for a big part of our lives."

Suddenly it all made sense. These fishmongers were living something that companies spent millions of dollars searching for every year. They had chosen to "bring their whole selves" to work. John wanted this feeling in his kingdom (a small company called ChartHouse Learning). Surely others did too. He had to make a film about this incredible idea.

He worked up enough courage to approach the owner. John said he was a filmmaker, but before he could continue, Johnny said, "Where have you been? We've been waiting for you."

So the young prince returned to the Emerald City with his noble film crew



(that's us). Later, after going through 40 hours of footage, 322 pots of coffee, 216 boxes of donuts and one wrestling match (involving the final donut), John and his merry band (that's us again), unearthed a long-forgotten language. This language described the way the fishmongers worked...

These four practices are the foundation of The FISH! Philosophy:

PLAY

BE THERE

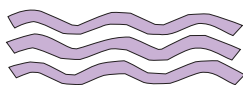
**MAKE THEIR
DAY**

**CHOOSE YOUR
ATTITUDE**

This language created new possibilities in organizations around the world. People reinvented what their experience at work could be. The passion and joy they discovered led to surprising business improvements. While people didn't always live happily ever after, they did see that they had a choice in the matter.

Now it's time for you to...

**Catch the Energy.
&
Release the Potential.**



For everyone too busy to read Our Story.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL MEMO

From: Your Name Here

To: All busy department managers

RE: Executive Summary-FISH!

- Unhappy fishmongers take personal responsibility for creating better workplace
- They develop unique transportation and end-user delivery system
- Wide-eyed filmmaker searching for "meaning of life" stumbles across market
- Filmmaker puts two and two together-creates four practices
- The four practices apply to personal as well as business development
- Hundreds of organizations worldwide create better work environment
- Quality of life improves
- Thousands of employees and customers are happier and more fulfilled
- We can benefit from FISH! too
- Let's Catch the Energy and Release the Potential

Dive into FISH!



The FISH! Philosophy is a set of simple, interconnected practices that everyone can tailor to their own life and work. A practice is a skill you work on every day. No one else can live it for you. The more you “practice” it, the better you get at it. When you make these practices part of your life, no matter what is going on around you, you will notice a positive difference in your relationships and within yourself.

The FISH! Philosophy is old wisdom for each new day. It reminds us what we often forget when we’re busy, stressed-out and self-absorbed. In people who are living the FISH! practices already, it supports and reinforces them. FISH! behavior often starts with one person and attracts others. When a community of people commit to it, the effect is powerful, building a higher quality of life at work.

Every person, every organization, is different. They will find different ways to bring The FISH! Philosophy into their own lives and cultures. Thanks to years of feedback from people who used these practices to improve engagement, teamwork and service, we can tell you some things that work—and what doesn’t.



FISH! is an Invitation



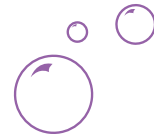
Johnny Yokoyama, owner of Pike Place Fish, invited his employees to join him in a new vision. That invitation made a huge difference for them—and it will for you, too. Unfortunately, many leaders assume programs must be implemented to “change” people. There is nothing inspiring about being “programmed.” No wonder so many programs fail and leaders grow impatient! They abandon one program for another, searching for the magic pill that will fix everyone and everything.

A manager we know introduced her team to FISH! Together they transformed their environment from conflict and pressure to support and opportunity. No one was forced to participate. People were inspired to take part because they were given the chance to take ownership of their environment. Upper management was so impressed they took FISH! companywide. But they tried to force-feed it. What had been an invitation was now an obligation. Plus, leadership chose not to participate in FISH!, seeing it as something for the staff to live—but not themselves. Many people became more cynical than before, and what worked well in one department floundered in other areas of the company.

In another instance, the new owner of an auto dealership tried to impose The FISH! Philosophy on a workforce that had a rocky relationship with the previous management. Because the employees didn’t know the new owner, they didn’t trust him. They resisted. The owner decided to live the four practices on his own. He built new relationships with his employees based on listening, clear accountabilities and trust. The employees embraced FISH! at their own pace and in their own ways. When they began to feel it, they began to live it.

There’s a big difference between being committed to The FISH! Philosophy and mandating how it’s done. The owner of the dealership didn’t try to force FISH! but he also made it clear that FISH! was not just the “flavor of the month.” He saw FISH! for what it is—a long-term commitment to a way of life—and he led the way by exemplifying that commitment.

FISH! Lives in Conversation



Every day at work we have conversations. Some are about tasks or strategies. Some are about how we feel about the boss, our work or our colleagues. Whatever the subject, how we talk about our work shapes the way we think and act at work. In other words, our conversations are our culture.

To shift your culture you must shift your language. The FISH! Philosophy—BE THERE, PLAY, MAKE THEIR DAY AND CHOOSE YOUR ATTITUDE—is a positive language. It helps us talk about the kind of workplace we want to create.

The FISH! Philosophy points us toward what we can do to make things better vs. what we can't do. Instead of talking about how “nobody cares around here,” FISH! opens the door to talk about how we can BE THERE for each other. Instead of complaining about how “they won't let us have any fun,” FISH! invites us to ask, “How can we bring more enjoyment and creativity to our work?”

Conversations are essential in building trust and commitment. Have you ever had a great relationship in which you didn't talk to each other? If we're not purposefully generating honest, hopeful conversations with the people we work with, all of us have a tendency to fill that gap with our own interpretations, insecurities and fears.

Initially your conversations may focus on why FISH! “can't work in our organization.” Don't become defensive. Just keep your conversations going and people will eventually realize that the power of FISH! lies within them.



Who Are You Being?



One of the most intriguing insights in FISH! comes when Ronnie says, “It’s about who you’re being while you’re doing what you’re doing.”

When you focus on who you are “being”, it influences everything you are “doing”. As Ronnie notes, “Are you being ‘This is a lousy, stinkin’ job’ or ‘We’re just selling fish?’ Or are you being world famous? You’re going to do something differently when you’re being world famous than you are if you’re being impatient.”

World famous is the lens through which Ronnie sees his work. It puts his choices into sharper focus. It gives him a new awareness, moment to moment, of whether his actions line up with who he wants to “be.” When Ronnie is wearing his world famous lens, he is less likely to be impatient or upset. He can see clearly that those choices *aren’t* world famous.

We all need a lens to help us focus on who we are “being.” Without it, it’s easy to slip into autopilot, to react without thinking, to sleepwalk through all the things we’re “doing.”

The FISH! Philosophy provides you with a new lens. Wearing it requires thinking about and taking responsibility for how you react to situations, how you treat others, how you show up for life. When you are wearing your FISH! lens, you will see opportunities to make a positive difference you never saw before.

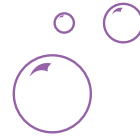
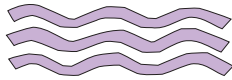
When you understand that you CHOOSE YOUR ATTITUDE—not the other way around—helpful, positive attitudes are likely to show up. When you choose a PLAY mindset, creativity and lightheartedness come naturally. When you choose a MAKE THEIR DAY way of being, opportunities to brighten people’s day come around the corner all day. When you make the commitment to BE THERE, you see more clearly what others need from you.



While you're doing	
Who are you being	What you're doing
Resentful	Doing yard work with a spouse and grumbling
Helpful	Doing yard work with a spouse and making the work easier
Manipulative	Coaching someone to make them do it "your way"
Supportive	Coaching someone to help them meet their goals
Inconsiderate	Listening and having side conversations in staff meetings
Engaged	Listening and contributing in staff meetings
Fearful	Hearing feedback and becoming defensive
Grateful	Hearing feedback and accepting it
Impatient	Rushing through customer interactions
Effective	Being with the customer fully during each interaction
Living wholeheartedly	Living FISH! in all parts of your life

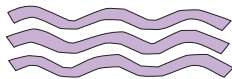
They All Work Together

The FISH! Philosophy is a way of seeing the people around you and finding opportunities to make a positive difference. When you put one of the FISH! practices into action, the others show up too. Here are a few stories that illustrate this:



The Star Spangled Banner

A man in his 90s with Alzheimers moved to a nursing home. When the aides tried to bathe and groom him he began swinging his fists wildly at them. Later that day an aide heard the man singing *The Star Spangled Banner*. She joined in with him, and discovered when they were singing, he would allow her to bathe him. Now every day at bath time, two voices, proudly singing our national anthem, echoes down the hallways.

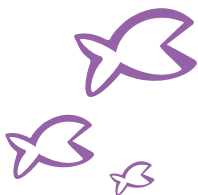
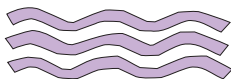


Pasta and Hugs

A few years ago a family with two young daughters was eating at an Italian restaurant. The restaurant served its food “family style” where it is passed around the table. The waitress, Karen, noticed the daughters, not wanting to try the spicy Italian food, only had bread on their plates. Karen got on her knees, put her arms around the girls’ shoulders and whispered, “What would you girls *really* like”? The girls thought for a moment and whispered back, “Plain noodles and butter.” With a twinkle in her eye Karen said, “I’ll be right back.” A few minutes later she returned to the table carrying two silver bowls, heaped with plain pasta noodles with pads of melting butter. The girls beamed as Karen set the bowls in front of them, and they gave Karen a big hug.

The Big Yellow Bus

Driving a school bus is like car-pooling 77 children every day—not always an easy task. But one bus driver has found ways to make the ride fun and memorable. First, he makes sure to greet every student who boards the bus. Occasionally he'll ask a student for her or his bus pass (the district doesn't use passes) just to get a reaction. When the kids respond they don't have one, he says, "Well, you'll just have to take a seat and have fun." When the bus is almost full, he asks the riders to sing "Happy Birthday" to the next student who gets on the bus. The reaction is always priceless. By involving the kids in the humor, the driver has built a better relationship with them. He has had to discipline students much less often than before and everyone is having more fun in their 77-seat yellow limousine.



In each story, the waitress, aide and bus driver were being there for their “customers.” Because they were not on autopilot, they saw what each person needed. They consciously chose their attitudes. No one would have blamed the aide for being grumpy about caring for someone who might hit her. Driving a school bus can wear on a person’s patience. The waitress could have decided it wasn’t her fault the girls didn’t like what her parents had ordered. Instead they chose to focus on the positive.

Play shows up in each story. The aide, waitress and bus driver were open to new possibilities and felt free to come up with a creative solution. No one told the aide she couldn’t sing while she worked. Singing “Happy Birthday” isn’t in the bus driver’s manual. Plain noodles with butter wasn’t on the menu. But each response was the right one for the situation.

Each response also made someone’s day. Rather than pick at bread on their plate, the girls enjoyed their meal (and so, by extension, did their parents). The elderly nursing home resident might not have been fully cognizant of what was happening, but he was clearly happier. It’s likely that the students on the bus will never forget their unconventional rides.

The four FISH! practices are interconnected. Where you find one, you’ll find the others.



John Yokoyama, owner of Pike Place Fish, says most of the market's success has come because "we're playing."

It's not surprising that people are drawn to the fun parts of PLAY. Psychologists say fun is a basic human need. Yet the fun people crave is also what organizations fear the most. We've been taught that if you're playing, you can't possibly be working.



Even when organizations acknowledge the need for fun, they may separate it from work—as in Fun Fridays or Crazy Hat Day. Any activity that brings colleagues together in a spirit of camaraderie is a good thing, but limiting fun to a specific time slot sends the message that the rest of work is not fun. It reduces PLAY to the role of an antacid.

PLAY is much more than an activity. It's a mindset you can bring to everything you do. In a playful workplace, people serve their customers, not by being stiff or scripted, but by being lighthearted, friendly, helpful and spontaneous. They are free to laugh out loud even as they work furiously to finish a project.

PLAY is closely linked to learning. Anywhere creativity flourishes, some type of PLAY is happening. We learn the same way we did as children—by "playing" with new ideas. The "throwing" you see in FISH! came about as a solution to a problem. The fishmongers used to walk from behind the counter to take orders, then had to hike all the way back around to wrap the fish and ring up the purchase. But one day, tired of all the walking, a fishmonger threw a salmon over the counter to a coworker. Eureka! Increased productivity. The fact that their customers loved it was a bonus.

MAKE THEIR
DAY

BE THERE

CHOOSE YOUR
ATTITUDE

PLAY™

In environments where PLAY is not welcome, it's easy to fall into well-worn patterns of thinking. These routines may seem efficient, but they can kill creative energy when it's needed for success. This approach has a human cost too. People shut down emotionally, leaving a big part of their enthusiasm and talents at home.

How can you encourage PLAY? People must feel safe before they are willing to take chances and make the mistakes that are essential for learning. It takes trust, based on a clear understanding of the organization's goals and values. We saw this at the Aspen Skiing Company. After seeing FISH!, the employees wanted to use PLAY to create more memorable experiences for their guests. But first they wanted to know the size of the "playing field". "I started with a relatively tight playing field," the CEO told us. "The employees said, 'No, we need an expanded playing field—expanded rules, a little more latitude, a little more trust.'" Together they expanded their playing field and created an environment of fun and engagement for guests.

Using all four FISH! practices together will guide you in creating boundaries. If you tell jokes that offend others, you are not being there for them. If you play in a way that upsets or excludes customers, you are not making their day. But when PLAY happens in a context of BE THERE, MAKE THEIR DAY and CHOOSE YOUR ATTITUDE it will be appropriate, satisfying and productive.

People PLAY in their own way. Some PLAY quietly or not at all. That's OK. We've heard of organizations that used FISH! to "make our people smile!" They mandated PLAY. Of course it didn't work. PLAY is not about throwing things. It's about throwing yourself into your work.

MAKE THEIR DAY is about acknowledging and recognizing the value of others. Many people go through life feeling invisible and unappreciated. They just want to be noticed and included—to feel like somebody cares. That’s why the fishmongers don’t just try to create special memories for their customers. They try to connect with every person who walks by.



MAKE THEIR DAY can be a big production—flowers, decorating a coworker’s office for their birthday—but it doesn’t have to be. It might be as simple as a smile, holding open a door for someone whose arms are full or remembering the name of a customer who comes in every few weeks. It might be getting a cup of coffee for a coworker or telling them, from your heart, how much you appreciate them. It’s taking that extra step you don’t usually take, and it’s especially satisfying when people don’t expect it or when they need it most.

MAKE THEIR DAY really starts with being there. When you’re fully present, you see more clearly what people need from you. It might make their day. It could make their life. MAKE THEIR DAY is easier when you realize that every moment contains the possibility that you can make a positive impact on someone. The fishmongers look at it this way: They are not just selling fish. They are making the world a better place to be, one person at a time.

And when you brighten someone’s day—not because you want to get something, but because that’s the person you want to be—you receive a gift that gives meaning and purpose to your life. Shawn the fishmonger says, “I

BE THERE

CHOOSE YOUR
ATTITUDE

PLAY

MAKE THEIR
DAY™

started working here just as a job. Something happened to me and I realized I was serving people. I was making people happy. This gave me a plus in my life and made me want to do it even more.”

When someone makes your day, you want to do the same. At one hospital a group of nurses began giving out tiny plastic fish to coworkers who did something nice for them. A plastic fish might seem silly but it was a symbolic way to show appreciation. Trust and teamwork increased. The nurses also gave plastic fish to patients who worked hard in rehab or needed encouragement. Patients began asking for fish to give to the staff and their families wrote thank-you notes on fish-shaped stationary. Before anyone realized it, a floor of sick people were “playing.”

It’s natural to want to make the day of the people who brighten your day. But what about those coworkers or customers who suck the energy out of the room? Why not see how far this practice can go and conspire with a few coworkers to MAKE THEIR DAY? The recipient might just pass it on.



BE THERE™

CHOOSE YOUR
ATTITUDE

PLAY

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“When you’re being there,” Shawn says in FISH!, “it’s like being with your best friend.”

How do you BE THERE for someone you love, particularly when they are facing a health crisis or serious problem? You give them your undivided attention. You focus on their needs. You put away your agendas. You listen from their perspective. You feel what they are feeling. You are connected and you are making a difference.



Now consider this all-too-typical situation: You’re physically present but your mind is a million miles away. You constantly look over another person’s shoulder at whatever catches your attention. You check your watch regularly (without the other person noticing, of course). Your hand twitches on your cell phone, waiting for the next can’t-be-missed call. Sound familiar?

There are many costs when you aren’t fully present: You’re likely to miss important moments in your life if you’re not “there” for others. Sure, you’re physically present, but your relationships feel half empty. People will feel like they are only temporary stops on your way to some other destination.

To really BE THERE for another person—whether that person is a customer, coworker, family member or friend—has a powerful effect. Think about how good it feels when someone gives you her or his undivided attention. By contrast, think about how it feels when someone, whether they are serving you or you are serving them, barely looks at you.

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PLAY

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BE THERE™

But what does it take to BE THERE? A group of nurses was discussing BE THERE when one of them announced that she was “too busy for all this.” A coworker pointed out that BE THERE doesn’t require any more time or doing anything extra. Why not be fully present while doing the things we have to do anyway?

BE THERE doesn’t take more energy either. We expend a lot of time and anxiety on things that have happened in the past or what we fear will happen in the future. It takes a toll on us emotionally and physically. A wise man once said that the antidote for burnout is not necessarily rest. The antidote is wholeheartedness—paying full attention to who you’re “being” while you’re doing what you’re doing. It is the halfhearted things you do while juggling other things that wear you out.

There is another, more challenging element to BE THERE. Nearly all of us have learned to listen only for what “fits” what we want to hear. It’s difficult to hear what other people are saying if your mind is busy with concerns, fears or judgments about who they are, or why their words are right or wrong, or if you are preparing a response. BE THERE, being truly present, means suspending what you think you know while you are listening.



One of the stories in the book FISH! TALES is about a young roofer who comes to work early one morning. Cold rain is pouring from the gray skies. The roofer would rather be elsewhere but he has a job to finish. As the freezing drops sting his face, he stares into the heavens and laughs. “Is that all you got?” he yells. “Bring it on!”



The roofer understands he has the power to choose his attitude. That’s what the fishmongers are talking about. “You gotta choose where you’re gonna be as soon as you get out of bed,” Bear says. “I do consciously make that choice every day.”

Of course there are times when it seems impossible to CHOOSE YOUR ATTITUDE, especially in situations where you’ve reacted the same way, over and over, through the years. When you are on autopilot, you don’t recognize you can make other choices. You also may not see how your attitude is affecting the people around you.

Making a “conscious” choice, like Bear does, starts with a clear intention. Ask yourself, “What kind of day do I want to have? What kind of person do I want to be? What attitudes will help me achieve that?” Awareness from moment to moment throughout the day comes next: “What is my attitude right now? What is causing it? Is my attitude helping my team or my customers? Is it helping me be the person I want to be?”

PLAY

MAKE THEIR
DAY

BE THERE

CHOOSE YOUR
ATTITUDE™

CHOOSE YOUR ATTITUDE isn't really about choosing the "correct" or "approved" attitude. Each of us is unique. Sometimes *angry* or *sad* is appropriate. Depending on the situation, you might choose to push for change. Or you might choose to accept what is. CHOOSE YOUR ATTITUDE asks that you make your choice with a clear intent and not blame it on something or someone else. When you take responsibility for your choices, you control your attitude, not the other way around. It's a better way to live.

The fishmongers see this way: When you look for the worst you'll find it everywhere. When you look for the best, you'll discover possibilities you never saw before.



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