

Flinging Fish for Fun or Profit

By Rebecca Fine

The situation looked grim for Johnny Yokoyama. The seafood market where he had once been an employee but was now the owner was more than \$300,000 in debt and sinking deeper fast. In fact, employee morale was at an all-time low, and the business was almost as dead as the fish no one was buying.

Now fast-forward to today and imagine yourself in Seattle's lively landmark, the Pike Place Market, overlooking Puget Sound and the snow-capped Olympic Mountains beyond. As you walk closer to the crowd gathered near the open-air center of this sprawling bazaar you can't help wondering what all that laughter and shrieking are about ...

... until you see a hefty two-foot long salmon flying over the gathering and into the waiting arms of the young man behind the counter — and the crowd goes wild!

Someone asks another rubber-aproned fellow for two pounds of halibut. "TWO POUNDS OF HALIBUT!" the order-taker calls out. "TWO POUNDS OF HALIBUT!" comes the reply, in unison, from EVERYONE else on the fish market crew.

Tourists are snapping photos like crazy, even handing their giggling toddlers up to pose with fish bigger than they are. And every so often, someone leans in for a closer look at that giant monkfish — the one there on the lower shelf, that prehistoric-looking fish with a mouth as big as a saucer. But that someone doesn't stay there long because one little tug on the string that's tied to the fish's tail and hidden under the ice makes that fish MOVE — and makes the curiosity-seeker straighten up fast!

This is certainly like no fish market you've ever seen before. Then you notice that in addition to all the silliness and good-natured clowning, something else is happening here.

People aren't just laughing, they're buying fish.

A LOT of fish!

Now, in his life-changing 1910 forgotten classic, *The Science of Getting Rich*, Wallace Wattles has laid out for us the basic principles by which the Pike Place Fish Market crew has turned what appeared to be failure into a stunning "World Famous" success. No, they didn't have the book to guide them; they just happened onto some of these principles in an instinctive way. Their backs were against the wall and they clearly saw that SOMETHING had to change.

Amazingly, they didn't focus on the obvious question, how can we sell more fish? Instead, they imagined a thriving market filled with happy customers and happy employees. And then they realized that if visitors were to enjoy the experience, first THEY had to change their own thinking and their own behavior. Sound familiar?

Oh, you see those two dozen executive-looking types over there, giggling like little kids? The ones wearing the matching jackets emblazoned with their famous corporate logo? They're here as part of a seminar on how to revitalize their customer service teams.

Turns out the fish flingers have stumbled upon some "secrets" that big corporations spend millions looking for. In fact, there are now several seminars, a couple of training videos, and even a best-selling book endorsed by some of the world's top business and motivational speakers and authors — all aimed at spreading this "fish philosophy" to other businesses.

So what exactly happened to turn a dark, dingy, dying seafood store into the star attraction of a famous city's famous landmark?

Well, listen up to the four main principles as outlined by Charthouse Learning Corporation's CEO John Christensen. Not too long ago Mr. Christensen wandered into the Pike Place Fish Market craziness just as I did (although I don't know if they hooked him with that monkfish gag the way they "caught" me!). ;-D

Mr. Christensen is the man who immediately realized that there was something special going on here that needed to be "world famous." Here's what it boils down to:

1. "Play: We put more energy into what we enjoy, and finding ways to "play" can lead to greater productivity and creativity. Play is NOT about acting irresponsibly. In the livable workplace, it is about finding ways to have more fun accomplishing serious goals."

Now Mr. Wattles doesn't say anything about "play" at all — and it's a little difficult to imagine it being taken seriously back at the turn of the last century when the "efficiency movement" was the darling of the industrial world. But today we can easily see that a light-hearted sense of "play" can be a major component of achieving consistent "efficient action."

2. "Be There: The glue in our humanity is in being fully present for one another. Being there also is a great way to practice wholeheartedness and fight burnout, for it is those halfhearted tasks you perform while juggling other things that wear you out."

"Put your whole mind into present action," Mr. Wattles says. And when one of the fish market guys stops goofing and turns to help a customer, that customer becomes the only other person in the place. Don't you wish EVERYONE you deal with in the course of a normal day had that kind of focus? (Don't they wish YOU did, too?)

3. "Choose Your Attitude: When you look for the worst you will find it everywhere. When you look for the best you will find opportunities you never imagined possible. You have the power to choose your attitude. If you find yourself with an attitude you don't want, you can choose another."

Mr. Wattles says, "You must learn to see the underlying truth in all things," and we know that our prevailing attitudes make this either possible or impossible. If your attitude is negative, you're expressing faith that what you do NOT want is on its way to you. But as Mr. Christensen notes, if the attitude you have at the moment isn't serving you — or anyone else — you can always choose again!

4. "Make Their Day: When you 'make someone's day' (or even moment) through a small kindness or unforgettable engagement, you can turn even routine encounters into special memories. Few things are as rewarding and infectious as

lifting another person's spirits, and the act of serving others quickly returns a feeling of satisfaction."

What a wonderful way to embody Mr. Wattles' advice always to "give more in use value than you take in cash value." The fish guys add value to every transaction in many ways: By letting the customer know that s/he is important (whether s/he buys anything or not!), by providing a light moment of entertainment (simply by being themselves and not taking themselves too seriously), and in countless other ways, large and small.

See, making money selling fish isn't just about selling fish. And it's the same with ANY business. (And if you think you aren't "in business" just because you work for someone else or some big company, look at it this way: You ARE in business, even if it's a one-person business with you as CEO, employee, and perhaps even the product!)

You can learn a lot from a bunch of fishy guys in Seattle, and in a moment I'll send you off to do just that. But first, let's wrap this up with a brief excerpt from the book, *Fish!*, a modern "business parable" that teaches the valuable lessons at the heart of the World Famous Pike Place Fish Market's stunning turnaround:

"Let me tell you about my grandmother. She always brought love and a smile to her work. All of us grandkids wanted to help in the kitchen because Grandma was so much fun. In the process a great deal of kitchen wisdom was dispensed. Us kids were given something truly precious, a caring adult.

"I realize now that my grandmother didn't love dishwashing. She BROUGHT love to dishwashing, and her spirit was infectious.

"Likewise, my buddies and I realized that each day when we come to the fish market we bring an attitude. We can bring a moody attitude and have a depressing day. We can bring a grouchy attitude and irritate our coworkers and customers. Or we can bring a sunny, playful, cheerful attitude and have a great day. We can choose the kind of day we will have. We spent a lot of time talking about this choice, and we realized that as long as we are going to be at work, we might as well have the best day we can have. Make sense to you?"

Makes sense to me! And if you agree, my friend, take a closer look. See, what the Pike Place Fish gang intuitively discovered is that if their situation was to change, first THEY had to change. And so they did. They decided to turn their dreary and unprofitable work into fun. Fun for themselves and for everyone who steps into their world, whether they buy fish or not.

Ask Johnny Yokoyama what he's most proud of these days and he'll tell you: "My employees and I made Pike Place Fish 'World Famous!'"

Then ask him what "World Famous" means to him, and you get the real scoop: "It means that we never stop creating possibilities — every day gives us the opportunity to grow, to learn something new, to get better than we were yesterday. We are gonna make your day!"

Why not make it YOUR objective to become "World Famous?" To find ways to bring the same "sunny, playful, cheerful attitude" to YOUR job or business — and to begin to revel in the delight of seeing the very same kind of RESULTS, including the ones you can take to the bank?

If the fish guys can do it, so can you! Here's where to learn more:

- Meet the guys and gals, see and hear the fun, and get some great seafood recipes, too!
<http://www.pikeplacefish.com>
- Learn more about the seminars, videos, etc.:
<http://www.fishphilosophy.com>
- Find out more about the book, *Fish!*, or get your own copy here:
<http://www.scienceofgettingrich.net/reading.html#Fish>

Have FUN — and remember to watch out for those low-flying fish!

Rebecca Fine is the founder of **The Science of Getting Rich Network** where you can download your free copy of the amazing 1910 forgotten classic, *The Science of Getting Rich*. <http://www.scienceofgettingrich.net> ©2000 Certain Way Productions.