



Go Fish!

Seattle's Pike Place Fish Market offers inspiration for exceptional customer service

Growing up in the Northwest I learned to deep sea fish for salmon, but I never learned the art of throwing fish. While visiting Seattle and the Pike Place Fish Market I learned a whole new side of how to handle fish. Many of you may have visited the market when AALL held its Conference in Seattle in 2003. The fish market has now taken its world-famous skills a little further and gathered them together in a book titled *Fish!*, by Stephen C. Lundin, Harry Paul, and John Christensen.

The book begins with a concept we've all heard before: Follow your heart and do what you love for your life's work. Thankfully it then acknowledges the reality that most of us face: We have our jobs for a reason and cannot just quit and follow our hearts. The book then offers advice on how to deal with reality. If we have jobs that may not excite us, or if we feel burned out, what can we do to make our situations work for us?

Fish! is a parable, an invented story about finding the deep source of energy, creativity, and passion that exists inside each of us by learning to love what we do, even if at the moment we may not be doing exactly what we love. The steps and concepts are innovative, exciting, and something all of us can look to for inspiration, which may help us bring ourselves to another level in our personal, family, and career lives.

The parable is centered on the Pike Place Fish Market. It describes how it was just any other fish market until the staff

discovered four important ingredients to make its business soar.

1. Attitude

There is always a choice about the way you do your work, even if there is not a choice about the work itself.

We can choose the attitude we bring with ourselves to work each and every day. By choosing to be positive, enjoyable, and pleasant each day, the workers at the fish market turned their business into a world-famous attraction instead of just a fish store. As long as you are working where you are, why not help make it world famous rather than ordinary? We have control over our attitudes, and we choose each and every day what it will be.

You may ask how this applies to our library duties. We have the opportunity to design the parts of our jobs we are responsible for to suit our individual personalities. In my library I work with Steve Averett, a reference librarian with a large family. He is so service oriented that while I was giving a prospective student a tour of our law library, one of the second-year students walked by and said, "The reason you come here is for Steve Averett; he will see to it that you learn to do your research correctly."

Each and every day Averett rides his bicycle some 20 miles to work at the university. A few years ago the students made T-shirts that read, "When I grow up I want to be like Steve." Recently they all

went in and purchased him a new bicycle because they admire and appreciate him so much.

His attitude is up every single day, and I am sure his life, like ours, is not up each and every day.

2. Play

With this principle, the book does not advise that we play at the expense of our business. Instead, there is a positive way to play and enjoy work and spread that feeling around. In the fish market, the workers throw the fish, catch them, and yell where it is going, such as, "Three salmon to New York City!" and off the fish go, flying across the market. In *Fish!*, the fish market personnel recommend "not to get uptight and to let things flow."

For law librarians, the idea is to enjoy the day with our patrons. Be glad to see them and acknowledge their needs. At my library, to keep the students up and excited at each training meeting we spotlight students who have filled out forms covering such important things as their favorite car, vacation, and what they would do with a million dollars. The answers are read, and everyone guesses who wrote the answers. The student who guesses the correct person wins a large Snickers bar. It's silly but fun.

Also, we have an "Awesome Employee Award," where students can suggest something wonderful they have noticed about another student worker. They fill out a form and turn it in to the "Sweet Student

