

“And what do you think Brad will remember about today?”

“Doing big-guy stuff, visiting the cold fish locker, and working with you.”

“We call that *make their day*. We look for as many ways as we can to create great memories. And we create great memories whenever we *make someone's day*. The playful way we do our work allows us to find creative ways to engage our customers. That's the key word: *engage*. We try not to stand apart from our customers but to find ways to respectfully include them in our fun. Respectfully. When we are successful, it makes their day.”

Mary Jane opened her journal again and wrote: **MAKE THEIR DAY.** Her mind filled with thoughts: *They engage people and welcome them to join in the fun. Customers like being a part of the show, and memories are created here which will bring smiles and make good stories for a long time afterward. Involving others and working to “make their day” directs attention toward the customer. Great psychology. Focusing your attention on ways to make another person's day provides a constant flow of positive feelings.*

“Hello, anyone home?”

Lonnie, Brad, and Stacy were all staring at her. “Sorry, I got to thinking about how powerful an ingredient that is. I hope we can find a way to apply *make their day* at First Guarantee.”

“The market is opening. Let's take the kids for something to eat; we can finish our discussion there. You kids hungry?”

“Yeah!”

BE PRESENT

They found a table at the café across the street and ordered coffee, hot chocolate, and sweet rolls. The market was rapidly filling with people, and Lonnie directed her attention to the way the fish guys interacted with those people. He asked her to watch them in action and told her she would discover the final ingredient if she watched carefully. Her eyes went from one monger to another, marveling at their playful manner and the lighthearted way they went about their work. She then turned her attention to those who were between activities. They looked vigilant, eyes roaming for the next opportunity for action.

It was actually a bad experience from the night be-

fore that helped her find the answer. She remembered her trip to the store with two cranky kids, both ready for bed. How long did she stand at the counter waiting for a clerk who was talking to another clerk about the modifications he made to his car? It seemed forever as the kids pulled on her dress with growing impatience. *That wouldn't happen here*, she thought. *These guys are present. They are fully engaged in their work. I wonder if they even daydream?* She asked Lonnie if that was the answer.

"You got it. Why am I not surprised?" He flashed his boyish grin. "Look out toxic energy dump, here she comes!" Then Lonnie continued, "I was at the grocery store, waiting my turn at the meat counter. The staff was pleasant and having a good time. The problem was they were having a good time with each other, not me. If they had included me in their fun, it would have been a whole different experience. They had most of it right but were missing the key ingredient. They weren't present and focused on me, the customer. They were internally focused."

She opened her journal and wrote: **BE PRESENT.** Lonnie was showing his first sign of not being present. She knew why when he said, "I need to get back to work. The guys were more than willing to

cover for me, but I don't want to overdo it. There is, however, one piece of advice I would like to offer before I leave."

"I'm all ears."

"Well, I don't mean to tell you how to do your job but I think it will be important for you to *find a way for your staff to discover the Fish Philosophy for themselves*. I'm not sure just telling them about the Fish Philosophy will do the trick. Brad had a good idea when he said you should bring them here."

"You and Brad make quite a team. In my rush to solve the problem, I could easily forget that the members of my staff need to have learning experiences of their own, and time to internalize the experience. Thanks so much—for everything. You made our day."

Brad couldn't stop talking on the way home; it was all she could do to be present for him. One somewhat crazy idea found its way into her head. She grinned and tucked it away for Monday.

She told me and then I discovered it for myself.

Unknown

Sunday Afternoon

During her private time on Sunday afternoon, Mary Jane opened her journal and briefly expanded on her notes.

CHOOSE YOUR ATTITUDE—*I think we have a good start on this one. The menu idea the staff came up with was terrific; the first real sign of progress.*

Without choose your attitude, all the rest is a waste of time. I need to continue exploring and expanding our awareness of this ingredient.

PLAY—*The fish market is an adult playground. If the fish guys can have that much fun selling fish, there is hope for us at First Guarantee.*

MAKE THEIR DAY—*Customers are encouraged to play also. The atmosphere is one of inclusion. Not at all like the boss I had in L.A. who talked to me like I was a tape recorder and never shared any of the interesting work.*

BE PRESENT—*The fish guys are fully present. They are not daydreaming or on the phone. They are*

scanning the crowd and interacting with customers.

They talk to me as if I was a long lost friend.

Monday Morning

As she entered the elevator, she noticed Bill right behind her. *That will save me the trip to his office*, she thought. The car was crowded so they didn't converse, but when the door opened on her floor, she turned to Bill and handed her boss her bag, which had a distinct odor emanating from it. "A gift, Bill. It's called a smiling sushi." As the door closed she heard a loud, "Mary Jane!"

A few seconds after she was at her desk the phone rang. "Strange gift, Mary Jane," said Bill with the hint of a smile in his voice. She told him what she had done on Saturday. "Stay with it, Mary Jane. I don't know what a fish market has to do with First Guarantee, but if you can make me smile with the day I have ahead, you may be on to something."

When she hung up the phone, she was aware that her relationship with Bill was somehow different. I

don't think many on his staff stand up to him, she thought. Strange as it seems, I believe he appreciates the fact that I have chosen not to be intimidated.

The Field Trip

At the first of her two Monday morning staff meetings she got right to the point. "I'm impressed and heartened by how you have worked at finding ways to remind us all that we can choose our attitude each day. The Choose Your Attitude Menu was a great idea, and it's the talk of the building. It's fun at last to hear some positive comments. Now it's time to take the next step. There is something I want you all to experience, so we are going on a lunchtime field trip. This group will go on Wednesday, the other group on Thursday. Brown bag lunches will be provided, so just bring yourselves.

"The field trip will be to a place many of you have visited before. We are going to a special fish market where we will study energy in action. There are a bunch of guys there who have solved their version of our problem. It will be our task to see if we can understand and apply their secrets for success."

"I have a dental appointment." "I have plans for lunch that day." The voices of those around her rose with objections. She was surprised when she heard a strong voice, her own, say, "I expect you all to be there and to rearrange your plans to make that possible. This is important."

On Wednesday, the first group met in the lobby and headed for the market. "All I want you to do is observe the scene you are about to see." She chuckled, "Be sure to keep your yogurt handy." Her use of the Yogi Berra quote, "You can observe a lot by watching," received one polite laugh. *Well, it's a start*, she thought.

The fish market was busy when they arrived, and they quickly dispersed. That made it hard for her to watch reactions, but she did notice a few of her staff obviously enjoying themselves. She saw John and Steve in close conversation with one of the fish guys and moved closer to observe. "When you are present with people you look right at them . . . just like being with your best friend . . . everything is going on around you but you're still taking care of just them," said the red-headed fish guy to John.

Good for John and Steve, she thought. Great initiative.

On Thursday the second group made the trip, most likely briefed by the first group. There were almost no questions, and the group was rather reserved until something special happened. Stephanie, a long-time employee, was asked if she wanted to go behind the counter and catch a fish. Although she had seemed quite shy at work, she accepted. Two fish slipped through her grasp, much to the delight of the crowd and the special amusement of her coworkers. On the third try, she made a dazzling bare-handed catch which was followed by thunderous applause, catcalls, and whistles. She was hooked as the fish guys made her day.

Stephanie seemed to open the door for others. As the fish flew overhead, the gang from First Guarantee did a lot more than raise their yogurt cups in the air.

Friday Afternoon Meetings

On Friday afternoon, she met with each group separately. "Wouldn't it be neat to work in a place where you could have as much fun as the guys do at the Pike Place Fish market?" she asked. There were a few nods and some smiles as the image of a flying fish passed

through their minds. Stephanie had the biggest smile of all. Then reality set in.

In both groups, protest followed the initial smiles. "We don't sell fish!" Mark said. "We don't have anything to throw," added Beth. "It's a guy thing," contributed Ann. "Our work is boring," said another. One wisecracker said, "Let's throw the purchase orders."

"You're right; this isn't a fish market; what we do is different. What I'm asking is: Are you interested in having a place to work which has as much energy as the world famous Pike Place Fish market? A place where you smile more often. A place where you have positive feelings about what you do and the way you do it. A place you look forward to being at each day. You've already demonstrated that in many ways we can choose our attitude. Are you interested in taking it further?"

Stephanie spoke up. "I like the people here; they're good people. But I hate coming to work. I can hardly breathe in this place. It's like a morgue. So I might as well admit it: I've been looking for another job. If we could find a way to create some life here, it would be a more satisfying place to work, and I would definitely consider staying."

"Thank you for your honesty and courage, Stephanie."

Steve added, "I want to make this place more fun."
Randy raised his hand.

"Yes, Randy?"

"You talked about your personal situation the other day, Mary Jane. I never heard a boss do that before and it got me thinking. I'm raising my son alone, and I need this job and the benefits that go with it. I don't like to make waves, but I'm sorry to admit I sometimes take out my frustrations on people in other departments. They seem to have it so good, while I'm trapped here in this pit. You've helped me realize that we make this place a pit by the way we act here. Well, if we can choose to make it a pit, then we can also choose something else. The thought of doing that has me really excited. If I can learn to have fun and be happy here, well, then I guess I can also learn to do that in other parts of my life."

"Thanks, Randy." She turned and looked directly at him with gratitude, adding, "I see a few heads nodding, and I know you've said something really important here today. You have touched me and others with your words from the heart. Thanks. Thank you for

your contribution. Let's build a better workplace, a place we love to be in.

"On Monday we'll start the process of putting the Fish Philosophy to work on the third floor. Between now and then, I want you to think about your personal experience at the fish market and write down any questions or ideas you have. When we get together next time, we can discuss how to proceed. Just let what you saw at the market stimulate your thinking."

The wisecracker popped up again, "Well, if we can't throw the purchase orders paper, can't we at least throw the confetti from the shredder?" Laughter filled the room. *That feels good*, she thought.

Mary Jane then passed copies of an outline she had developed at the market and walked everyone through her personal observations. She encouraged her staff to remember and record their own thoughts over the weekend.

After the second meeting ended, Mary Jane retreated to her office and sat exhausted at her desk. *I gave them something to think about over the weekend. But will they?* Little did she know that half a dozen of her employees would find a reason to visit the market again that weekend, many of them with family and friends.

MARY JANE'S OUTLINE

Choose Your Attitude—The fish guys are aware that they choose their attitude each day. One of the fish guys said, “When you are doing what you are doing, who are you being? Are you being impatient and bored, or are you being *world famous*? You are going to act differently if you are being world famous.” Who do we want to be while we do our work?

Play—The fish guys have fun while they work, and fun is energizing. How could we have more fun and create more energy?

Make Their Day—The fish guys include the customers in their good time. They engage their customers in ways which create energy and goodwill. Who are our customers and how can we engage them in a way that will make their day? How could we make each other's days?

Be Present—The fish guys are fully present at work. What can they teach us about being present for each other and our customers?

Please bring your thoughts
with you on Monday.

mjk

That Weekend at the Fish Market

“Teacher give you an assignment?”

Stephanie looked up and simultaneously saw a fish fly through the air and Lonnie's smiling face. “Hi. I guess you might say my boss gave me some homework.”

“That wouldn't be Mary Jane, would it?”

“How did you know?” Her response was drowned out by a monger shouting, “Three tuna flying away to Paris,” with a fake French accent. Lonnie seemed to hear her anyway. *No wonder they're so good at being present*, she thought. *They have to be if they want to hear anything above all this commotion.*

“I saw you here during the week with Mary Jane's group. You are also the first yogurt dude I remember catching a fish as long as I've been here.”

“Really?”

“So how can I help you? You seem puzzled.”

She looked down at her notes. “I think I understand *be present*, the way you are right now with me. And when I was catching the fish—well . . . I will never forget the way you made my day. Play is something that comes easy for me—I love to enjoy myself

and fool around. But *choose your attitude* is still a bit of a mystery. I mean, doesn't your attitude have a lot to do with the way you are treated and what happens to you?"

"I know just the person you need to ask about attitude: Wolf. Wolf was on his way to a career as a professional race car driver when he had a serious accident. Well, I'll let Wolf tell the story. We need to go back into the locker. Will you be warm enough?"

"Can we come, too?"

Stephanie looked to her left and saw Steve, Randy, and one very cute child. After introductions, they all went back to talk to Wolf, who told them how, while he was recovering from his accident, he learned to choose his attitude every day. His words made a deep impression on the three and they vowed to share them with their fellow workers at the Monday meeting.

Afterward, Steve had to take off, but Stephanie, Randy, and Randy's son went across the street to a café. The adults sipped coffee, while Randy's son ate a giant chocolate chip muffin.

"You know," said Stephanie, "we might as well clean up our toxic energy dump because there is no

guarantee the next job will be any different. And think about it. How many bosses are there like Mary Jane? I really respect her. Think about what she's been through. I hear she even stood up to that jerk Bill Walsh. None of the other department managers ever stood up to that bully. I mean that counts for something, doesn't it, Randy?"

"Stephanie, you're reading my mind. If these fish guys could do what they have done, the sky is the limit for us with a boss like Mary Jane. It isn't going to be easy. Some of our coworkers are as frightened as I used to be. They're skeptical because they're scared. Perhaps if we provide a positive example it will help. All I know is that things won't get better until we choose to make them better—and I want things to get better."

As Stephanie walked to her car she noticed Betty and her husband. She waved and then became aware of three other people from her office in the crowd. *Great!* she thought.

The Plan Unfolds

There was a buzz in the room as the first group assembled for the Monday morning meeting. Mary Jane

opened the meeting by saying, "We're here to clean up what has been called a toxic energy dump. Today we'll see if we have any additional lessons from the market and then decide on our next steps. Did anyone think of anything during the weekend that we should consider before moving on?"

Stephanie and Randy jumped to their feet and took turns recalling their conversation with Wolf. Stephanie began.

"Wolf was really cool, although he was a little scary at first. I mean his voice is like a growl. Anyway, he told us his story of having a career as a professional race car driver torn away from him by a freak accident. He said he wallowed in pity for a while and then, when his girlfriend left him and friends stopped calling, he realized he had a basic choice to make. He could choose to live and to live fully, or he could let life slip away in a series of missed opportunities. He has been making the choice to live fully every day since. It was quite a story."

"My son was fascinated with Wolf," continued Randy. "Wolf really got me thinking about our situation here on three, and how much power we have over the kind of place we create. We could make

three into a great place to work if we learn the lesson of Wolf. We must choose our attitude every day and choose it well."

Steve also offered some observations.

"Thanks, Steve. Thank you, Randy. Thanks, Stephanie. It sounds like you were busy this weekend. And thanks for not asking for overtime!" After the laughter died down, Mary Jane asked, "Who else has something to offer which will help us understand these points?" Forty-five minutes later, Mary Jane decided to bring the discussion to a close. "Any ideas on where we go from here?"

"Why don't we form a team for each of the four ingredients?" said one of the newer employees.

There were a number of nods.

"All right," said Mary Jane. "Let me make sure the other half agrees with this approach. Why don't you sign up for the group you prefer; if the other group goes along, I will put everything in memo form and get it to you tomorrow. Is there anything else to discuss?"

At the end of the meeting she passed around a sign-up sheet and asked each of them to sign up for one of the four teams. The second group fully supported

the idea of teams and seemed relieved to have a concrete plan of action.

The Teams Go to Work

The Play Team had a few too many volunteers, so Mary Jane did a little gentle negotiating. "I have a genuine Pike Place Fish market T-shirt for the first three volunteers who will move from Play to Choose Your Attitude or Be Present." Once the teams were balanced, she put together a memo with the general guidelines and expectations.

TEAM GUIDELINES

- Teams will have six weeks to meet, study their topic, collect additional information, and put together a presentation that will be made to the group as a whole at an off-site meeting.
- Each presentation must have some action items that we can consider for implementation.
- Teams will be responsible for setting their own meeting times and may use two hours of work

time each week for team business. Arrangements must be made to cover the work of those at team meetings during business hours.

- Each team has a budget of \$200 to be spent at its discretion.
- Teams will facilitate their own meetings.
- I will be available to troubleshoot if the team reaches an impasse, but I would rather the team work out its issues as a team.

**Good luck! Let's create a place
where we all want to work!**

MJK

Team Reports

Six weeks had passed since the teams started meeting. The presentations would be made today. Mary Jane had asked Bill if people from other departments could handle essential functions for a morning, so the whole group could meet; Bill surprised her by offering to help personally as well as organize the coverage. "I don't know what you're doing," he said, "but I already