

Definitely Mabey

Love the one you are with

I think we should change the names of folks in their 50s and 60s to Baby Doomers from Baby Boomers. My basis for this is the simple premise that we have drilled into our children's head that they can do anything they want if they just try.



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The negative results of this well-meaning mantra are two-fold:

1. If they are not doing what they want they must be failures; and
2. They can ignore economic reality in their quest to do whatever they desire.

As Ken Blanchard (co-author of *One Minute Manager*) articulated, “the fact is that in the real world there are conditions which prevent us from chasing the perfect, ideal job.” This includes things like financial and family obligations or simply being too busy being stressed out to maintain the energy required to find it and even if you find it, the courage to make the leap of faith required by most real changes in life.

It seems to me in discussions with law firm leaders and other consultants that the sense of entrapment and not entitlement is causing the most angst and anxiety across all strata of lawyers in law firms today. This sense of being trapped is one of the most difficult challenges firms face and, at the same time, one they misguidedly feel the least equipped to handle.

As careers evolve and dissolve, one simple theme seems to surface repeatedly—even if there is no choice about the work itself that you do, there is always a choice about the way you do your work! Seems so simple, but is incredibly hard to live up to in the onslaught of the stresses and emotions we all deal with on a regular basis.

More years ago than I choose to share, a couple of us were exposed to a book by Stephen Lundin, Harry Paul, and John Christensen titled *Fish! A Proven Way to Boost Morale and Improve Results*. We became so caught up in the philosophy that videos were bought; presentations to staff and lawyers alike were made; copies of the book were forced on anyone who even appeared remotely interested, reminder cards of the four underlying points of the Fish philosophy were printed; etc. But sadly we all got caught up in our work and personal lives and it became another well-intentioned change lost along life's journey.

This past spring, my wife and I travelled to Seattle to see the grandkids and when my son-in-law (who is an incredible stay-at-home dad) suggested we go tour Pike's Place market I remembered this was the site of the famous fish market talked about in the book. So I was keen to go not just because of the bakeries and food stalls.

If you ever read the book and wonder if it is true or imaginary—it is true. I stood and watched guys

having more fun working in a damp, smelly (not a fish lover obviously), breezy outdoor market than I could ever recall having in my climate controlled, scent-free, view of the harbour office earning well above the minimum wage. They were having fun throwing fish around (over patron's heads), convincing the shoppers to try throwing the fish, stopping and having their pictures taken, stopping and chatting with onlookers even if they were not going to be buying anything, and the whole time aware of where they were at and what they were doing.

The four basic tenets of the fish market are:

- choose your attitude;
- play is important;
- make your customers' day;
- be in the present.

Sounds simple but it raises the flag of how can it possibly address the complex personalities and issues found in law firms?

As pointed out in previous columns, part of the issue in firms today is we have over thought and tried to develop complex solutions to issues whose answers really rest in simplicity.

So what is the benefit of “*choose your attitude?*”

1. Choosing your attitude and acting like a victim are mutually exclusive; and
2. We can bring our best qualities to work—it is our choice to make. We may not be able to choose to do what we love but anyone can choose to love what they do and if we so choose, the firm can become a very positively charged place to work.

“Work becomes the reward and not just a way to rewards (productivity)...”

Why is it that “*play is important?*”

1. Happy people treat others well (firm mindedness);
2. Fun leads to creativity (value add);
3. Having a good time at work is healthy; and
4. Work becomes the reward and not just a way to rewards (productivity).

Why is “*make your customer’s day?*” important?

1. First and foremost in its simplicity—it is good for business; and
2. It will focus our attention away from our problems, onto how we can make a positive difference to others, which in turn will make the lawyers feel good and release even more energy.

And what is so effective about “*being in the present?*”

1. When you are in the present you show consideration and respect for the other person—be they a colleague or a client (firm value); and

2. You catch little things before they become big things, whether they are in the firm's or client's interest.

The bottom line is each of us should think about the foregoing on a personal level and choose to really make today a great day rather than just mouthing the words. Remember, we can be serious about our work without being serious about ourselves!

Holiday cheer

The holiday season provides a great opportunity to take a break from the hectic pace of working life and to relax and enjoy with friends and family. At any time of year and especially, at this time of year it is the good things we need to take joy in. Friends and family should be our focal point, if for no other reason than they are with us unconditionally in the challenging as well as the good times. It is also a time to take stock of the events of the rapidly ending year and to appreciate the successes you have experienced, no matter how large or small, and the efforts of everyone who has contributed to these successes.

Until next year, in the words of James Agate,

"My New Year's Resolution is to tolerate fools more gladly, provided this does not encourage them to take up more of my time."

Comments or Questions?

*First Published in **Canadian Lawyer**
December 2012*



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