

Fish Philosophy



The Fish! philosophy started at Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle. Fishmongers turned a money-losing, morale-draining business into a world-famous attraction by deciding to have fun at work—largely by tossing fish around and joking with customers. Out of this turnaround came four Fish! principles: play, make their day, be there, and choose your attitude.

Companies can learn from this example. To create an exciting workplace, employees need to learn how to play, just as the fishmongers toss fish. To “make their day,” employees must interact with clients so they, too, have a positive experience. To “be there,” employees need to be focused (not mentally in several places) and actively engaged to have fun. And “choose your attitude” says that everyone has the power to choose how they feel at work.

For example, Layoffs and cutbacks had sapped staff morale at Cooley Dickinson Hospital in Northampton, Massachusetts, and the employee satisfaction team couldn’t figure out how to improve the situation. Then, someone mentioned Fish!—a set of principles for creating positive attitudes at work. After viewing the Fish! video during a fish fry, managers and staff started celebrating birthdays, enjoying ice cream breaks, and hosting a Christmas holiday gift-wrapping service. Morale soared. “The FISH team is keeping employee satisfaction out front,” says Cooley Dickinson’s director of guest services. “That stuff doesn’t happen by accident.”

Some more examples include:

- ❖ Human resources staff members at Scope International in Malaysia have fun with color coordination days (where they wear the same color on a particular day).
- ❖ Sprint Global Connections Services call center staff in Kansas City, Missouri, toss around foam toys, walk around in bunny slippers, and dance under a disco ball suspended from the ceiling. Sounds strange, but these antics helped Sprint to reduce turnover, improve productivity, and win a Call Center of the Year award.
- ❖ At Matanuska Valley Federal Credit Union, staff members have a fish parade around the building’s exterior before opening. “The winters here in Alaska can get pretty cold and bleak starting in October,” explains a manager at the Palmer,

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Alaska, financial institution. "Fish! has helped boost morale and is just plain fun during those long months."

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