

CYNDI CROTHER AND THE CREW OF
WORLD-FAMOUS PIKE PLACE FISH

Catch!

A Fishmonger's Guide to Greatness



*Stop Floundering and Become More
Effective in Your Life and Work*

An Excerpt From

Catch!:
A Fishmonger's Guide to Greatness

by Cyndi Crother and the Crew of World-Famous Pike Place Fish
Published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers

Contents

vii	Preface
xiii	Acknowledgments

1 A Day in the Life of World Famous Pike Place Fish 3

3	Cast of Characters
9	Catch! of the Day
12	The Map and the Territory
14	Review of Chapter 1

2 Ordinary to Great 15

15	It's All over Here
18	From Human Doers to Human Beings
24	Path to Greatness
33	Review of Chapter 2

3 Intention and Commitment 35

35	Communicating through Intention
44	What Is Your Intention?
48	Results of Your Intention
55	Review of Chapter 3

4 Opportunities and Transformation 57

- 57 Oh, the Possibilities!
- 62 Looking for Opportunities
- 67 Invitation to New Opportunities
- 73 Review of Chapter 4

5 Shaping Your Reality 75

- 75 New Thoughts about Thinking
- 85 What You Say Is What You Get
- 91 Additional Thoughts about Language
- 97 Review of Chapter 5

6 Problems Are a Good Thing 99

- 99 Communicating Problems
- 109 How Fast Can You Get Off the Hook?
- 113 Problems: Doorways to the Future
- 121 Review of Chapter 6

7 Live What Inspires You 123

- 123 Expanding Your Focus beyond Yourself
- 126 Generating Greatness
- 131 Transformation Begins Now
- 137 Review of Chapter 7

- 139 Index
- 149 About the Authors

Preface

The World Famous Pike Place Fish Market is located in the Pike Place Public Market in Seattle, Washington. When John Yokoyama (Johnny) purchased the fish market in 1965, it was nothing like it is today. In the beginning, it was pretty ordinary and operated just as one would expect any fish market to operate. Although it is still one of four fish markets at the Pike Place Public Market, there is nothing ordinary about World Famous Pike Place Fish.

World Famous Pike Place Fish is now a destination point for visitors to Seattle. Even people unfamiliar with Pike Place Fish by name usually recognize it as the place that throws fish when customers make a purchase. Often they have seen the fish market on NBC's *Frasier* or MTV's *The Real World*, on *Emeril Live* or *Wheel of Fortune*, or in the movie *Free Willie*. Pike Place Fish has also been publicized in any number of magazines and newspapers, including *Fast Company* and the *Toronto Star*, and they hold a *Guinness* world record for the most fish thrown in a minute!

ChartHouse Learning Corporation produced two award-winning corporate training films about the market, *Fish!* and *Fish! Sticks*, and published *Fish!*, a book that made the *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times* best-seller lists, and lists in Japan and Germany. In March 2001, CNN identified the World Famous Pike Place Fish Market as "the most fun place to work" in the United States.

Hardly what one would expect from a bunch of fishmongers, but these are no ordinary fishmongers.

These days, Pike Place Fish and their partner biz-FUTURES Consulting are working together to share their insights with organizations both domestically and internationally. Johnny, Jim Bergquist, and a handful of fishmongers travel to organizations and conferences to throw fish, create a lot of excitement, and generate interest in a more powerful way of doing business and living life. Most importantly, they make a difference for people.

Pike Place Fish employs fifteen to seventeen fishmongers, depending on seasonal activity. The term *fishmonger* is a fifteenth-century term meaning “fish dealer.” On any given day, six to nine fishmongers sell fish at the Market. Pike Place Fish is open for business every day of the year — twelve hours a day Monday through Saturday, and ten hours on Sunday. While they are best known for the energy and excitement they generate at the Market, they are less known for their unprecedented financial results. In the past seventeen years, Pike Place Fish’s cost of doing business has dropped nearly twenty-five percent, revenues have quadrupled, and profits have increased tenfold!

I teach quality assurance and corporate training in the Industrial Technology Department at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, California, and I learned about Pike Place Fish at a leadership conference in fall 2001. At first, I thought Pike Place Fish might be offering a new organizational quality initiative, and I wanted more information, to see if I should incorporate

their concepts into my classes.

The hype surrounding Pike Place Fish intrigued me. It was unclear why a little fish market in Seattle was getting so much acclaim from corporations large and small in virtually every sector imaginable. I even found several companies in San Luis Obispo talking about Pike Place Fish, including the local feed store where I buy supplies for my horse. It appeared everyone was interested in Pike Place Fish!

My curiosity turned into a desire to tell their story. At the time, I wasn't sure how this might come about, but I felt strongly that people everywhere could benefit from learning more about the guiding principles of Pike Place Fish. It is my intention to make a difference in people's lives, and I was amazed to find a business that held many beliefs similar to my own. It seemed there was much to be learned behind the scenes at this little fish market, so I contacted the owner of Pike Place Fish and proposed sharing the organization's underlying beliefs and guiding principles with the rest of the world.

I first met the fishmongers in February 2002, and I visited them several times throughout the year while continuing to teach at Cal Poly. During my visits I worked at the Market, set up the smoked salmon and box displays, and helped put things away at night. I learned the physical aspects of the job as well as the fishmongers' jargon and the mental aspects of their work. I spent a lot of time talking to the guys – sometimes in formal interview settings, and sometimes just in casual conversations. I was

even fortunate enough to be hit in the head by a flying crab and locked in the cooler on the same day—it was quite an experience!

One of the biggest and most important life lessons I learned from the fishmongers is that I am responsible for what I experience in my life and for whatever future I cause to happen in my life. The fishmongers call that idea “It’s all over here”—each person is solely responsible for his or her thoughts, feelings, emotions, decisions, actions... everything. Virtually every story in *Catch!* illustrates the guiding principle at Pike Place Fish: You are responsible for your life.

For example, if I am upset because I have to stand in a long line at the grocery store, I am not upset at the line or the people in line. I am upset because I am choosing to be upset; chances are, standing in line does not match my expectation of going to the grocery store. The idea is that nothing outside of yourself makes you happy or sad—it’s all within you; hence, “It’s all over here.”

Catch! is the story behind the hype, and it relates the real experiences of the fishmongers who work at Pike Place Fish. At times, the language they use may seem a bit awkward because they use many catchphrases (no pun intended) with one another, at work and in their personal lives. However, it’s not the specific language they use that makes the stories so powerful. Rather, the language is simply a reflection of their underlying guiding principles. Through their stories, you will experience their guiding principles and their own personal transformations, and if

the fishmongers can do it, so can you. How did they do it? Welcome to their stories...

The first chapter tells you about World Famous Pike Place Fish. It introduces you to the fishmongers, gives you a glimpse into a normal day at the Market, and provides insights into the language – and into the thinking behind the language. The second chapter reveals the main underlying tenets that allow effective use of the guiding principles. Chapter 3 discusses the notions of intention and commitment, because the remaining chapters derive from one's clear understanding of his or her intention and commitment.

Once you find your intention and are committed to making it happen, your eyes will be open to new and exciting opportunities, as revealed in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, you will see how these new opportunities – and how you think about these opportunities – begin to shape your new reality. You will see the importance of language as a tool in this shaping and in connecting to other human beings.

Once you have these new ideas under your belt, Chapter 6 gives a specific application of them and invites you to recognize conflict and problems as a good thing, since creative conflict leads to many opportunities for growth and development.

Finally, all of the guiding principles are integrated in Chapter 7, giving you the tools to access a more effective and meaningful way of living and working. Through their stories, you will learn how all members of one company

are nurturing and sustaining a healthy work environment. I hope you will be inspired to more fully actualize these concepts in your life and to really catch *Catch!*

Cyndi Crother

August 2003



A Day in the Life of World Famous Pike Place Fish

Cast of Characters

Throughout this book, you will be reading stories from each of the fishmongers, so it might help to know a little bit about them. **Johnny Yokoyama** purchased Pike Place Fish in 1965 and used to work at the Market with the guys. These days the fishmongers pretty much keep the fish flying on their own; however, Johnny remains actively involved in coaching the crew and in leading them into an exciting and inspiring future.

Dicky Yokoyama, Johnny's brother, started working at Pike Place Fish over twenty years ago and is presently one of the managers. **Samuel "Sammy" Samson** is the other manager, but you usually can't see him because he's moving so darn fast! **Keith Bish**, otherwise known as "Bear," was the driver and utility person for years; now you can find him working at the king salmon display. **Justin Hall** has been working at Pike Place Fish since he was thirteen



Dicky Yokoyama

years old. He has been there for thirteen years, and his claim to fame is being in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for the most fish thrown in a minute.

Jaison Scott was practically born at the Market, and



Keith Bish (aka Bear)



Justin Hall



Samuel "Sammy" Samson

he has worked at Pike Place Fish for seven years. He is well known as an outstanding drummer for Severhead, a hard-driving Seattle band. **Darren Kilian** has been with Pike Place Fish for five years; he can usually be found at the



Jaison Scott



Darren Kilian



Dan Bugge (aka Bugge)



Chris Bell

computer near the clam and mussel displays, putting together many of the Internet orders. **Dan Bugge**, known to everyone by just his last name, has been with Pike Place Fish for three years. He is best known for throwing a fish into a baby carriage—with the baby still in it! Don't worry; the baby was okay, if a bit startled.

Chris Bell currently is the utility person and driver. Every day he picks up the freshest fish available to mankind and keeps the rhythm going by making sure



Andy Frigulietti



Erik Espinoza



Ryan Dehn (aka Bison)



Anders Miller

everything is well stocked. **Andy Frigulietti** came to Seattle from Boston and has worked with Pike Place Fish for nearly four years. He works in front of the crab and lobster displays with **Erik Espinoza**, who has worked at the Market for about two years. Erik has had the opportunity to travel to some interesting vacation destinations.

Ryan Dehn, also known as “**Bison**,” has worked on and off with Pike Place Fish for about three years. Hard to track down, Bison’s always on the go and keeps all the displays



Jeremy Ridgway



Russell Price



Ben Bish



Matt Lewis

well stocked. **Anders Miller** has been with Pike Place Fish for about three years and spends most of his time behind the counter (also known as “up on top”), catching and filleting the fish thrown his way. He also delivers orders to the hotels after the shop closes in the evening. Usually behind the counter with Anders is **Jeremy Ridgway**, a self-proclaimed expert-in-training who has been with Pike Place Fish for about one year.

When he’s not cruising around Seattle on his Harley, **Russell Price** works in front of the king salmon or crab displays and has been aboard for three years. **Ben Bish**, Bear’s son, has been working part-time at Pike Place Fish since he was fifteen years old. He also generally works out in front, by the crab and shellfish displays or by the king salmon display.

Matt Lewis, Doug Strauss, Dave Brooks, and Ryan Kimura also worked at Pike Place Fish while I was compiling the stories for the book. Matt and Dave are now attending college, Doug teaches high school locally, and Ryan moved to Las Vegas for another job opportunity.

Each of them visits Pike Place Fish regularly, so you might see them at the Market as well.

One thing to note is that each of the fishmongers is responsible for being able to do anything that is required – cross training at its finest! They each work up on top, answer the phones, work out in front, put together shipping orders, make deliveries – everything.

Other contributing members of the cast are longtime consultant **Jim Bergquist** and his team, who help facilitate the process of creating goals and solving problems at Pike Place Fish.

Catch! of the Day

If you have not had the opportunity to visit Pike Place Fish, it might be helpful to know what a normal day looks like. Every day except Sunday begins at 6:30 A.M. (Sunday begins at 7:00 A.M.), when the fishmongers get into a huddle to discuss the goals for the day. They talk about how much inventory of each type of fish they have on hand and about what they want to accomplish on that day. The huddle ends with a loud, ceremonial “Aayyyyyeeee!”

After the huddle, each fishmonger sets up a different seafood display, called a “show.” On a typical day, the shows include smoked, boxed, and king salmon, shellfish and crab, parrot fish and other exotic-looking fish, monkfish, clams and mussels, and oysters. While some of the fishmongers set up the displays in front of the counter, other fishmongers work behind the counter, cutting up the fillets and steaks for display behind the glass.



Entrance to Pike Place Public Market with World Famous Pike Place Fish on the left

Once everything is set up, the fishmongers hose down the walkways, clean the display case glass, and hang labels to identify the different types of fish. Many of the fillets and steaks look quite similar, and it takes a keen eye to distinguish between them. All the while, early-bird customers are making purchases. In addition to the fish products, customers buy “World Famous Pike Place Fish” T-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, and other goodies. As the day unfolds, increasing numbers of visitors and customers come to the Market, creating a lot of activity. The fishmongers move all day, taking orders off the phone and the Internet and shipping fish to every imaginable distant corner of the world.

If you want to see the action from your home, check out the Pike Place Fish website and select *webcam*. One of the things you will see is that any time a customer places an order, the fishmonger serving him or her literally throws the fish about ten to fifteen feet to another fishmonger, who catches it while standing behind the counter. There is not a lot of room for error, but the fishmongers have become quite skilled at throwing crab, salmon, and even bags of clams. It is a well-synchronized process, and no one throws a fish until the fishmonger taking the order calls out the specific order to the others. Once the order is yelled to the crew, the crew responds by repeating the order aloud. Then the fish fly! Because of their communication system, it is rare to see the fishmongers make a mistake.

Originally, the crew threw fish in order to avoid walking all the way to the counter to weigh a customer's order. However, customers and visitors got such a kick out of seeing fish fly that it has become a part of Pike Place Fish's culture. Sometimes customers even get in on the action, and while visiting the Market you might see someone try their hand at catching a flying fish. This usually gets many laughs from the watching crowd — those fish can be slippery!

At 5:45 P.M., sharp, one of the fishmongers yells “five forty-five” to initiate the closing process. It takes approximately forty-five minutes to break down the displays and put away all the fish for the night. By 6:30, everything is stowed, and the crew gets into another huddle. They talk about how the day went in relation to the goals that were



Stocked displays at the Pike Place Fish stall

set in the morning huddle. They divide the tips they earned throughout the course of the day, and then they close shop. One of the fishmongers will then deliver orders to customers who are guests staying at the various local hotels.

The Map and the Territory

One thing that you may notice as you read through the fishmongers' stories is that sometimes their language seems a little odd. While the terms and jargon are catchy, the power of the stories does not come from the specific terms; it comes from the attitude and mental framework reflected in the terms. The language is simply a reflection of the concepts and underlying Pike Place Fish principles.

The relationship between the language and the principles is analogous to a map and the territory a map depicts. A map is not exactly what the actual territory looks like, but it is nonetheless a depiction of the characteristics of the territory. The map represents a tool to help you understand what you might expect in the actual territory. The same is true of the language the fishmongers use: the language is simply a tool to understand the guiding principles that make the fishmongers effective in their lives and at work.

Before we get started, Russell and Anders have the following introduction for you:

Some of you may know who we are, and some of you may not. Whatever the case may be, we want to acknowledge you for supporting us and believing in what we stand for, for the commitment to yourself that led you to this book, and for your willingness to listen to some ideas that may be different from the ones you have now. We believe your willingness to be open to these ideas is the key to a future of infinite possibilities. Enjoy!

Russell and Anders

Review of Chapter 1

- ✱ Organizational greatness starts with individual greatness.
- ✱ Pike Place Fish language is simply a tool to help you understand the underlying guiding principles shared in the fishmongers' stories.
- ✱ The intention of *Catch!* is to offer you the tools to put the fishmongers' beliefs into action and to become more effective in your life and work.

this material has been excerpted from

Catch!:
A Fishmonger's Guide to Greatness

by Cyndi Crother and the Crew of World-Famous Pike Place Fish

Published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers

Copyright © 2009, All Rights Reserved.

For more information, or to purchase the book,
please visit our website

www.bkconnection.com