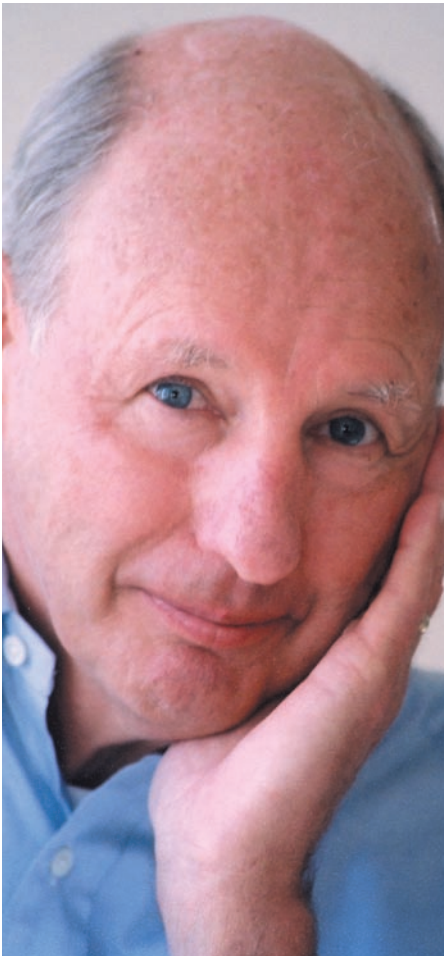


SWIMMING AGAINST THE TIDE FISH!

PHILOSOPHY CREATOR STEPHEN LUNDIN – HR SUMMIT EXCLUSIVE

Stephen Lundin' creator of the FISH! Philosophy – the global organisational change phenomenon tells *HRM* how play at work can be productive



It's a Monday morning, but you can't wait to come to work. You walk past the cubicles of your colleagues and hear enthusiastic conversations about how promising this week looks to be for business. Your boss greets you with a smile and tells you that you have been a superstar so far, and he wants you to be in charge of a new project. Seems unreal? Not if your organisation has adopted the Fish! Philosophy, according to Dr Stephen Lundin, author of *Fish!* and creator of the phenomenal organisational change philosophy.

The benefits to a pleasant and happy workplace are not unknown to either employers or employees. Time and again, research has proven that happy employees are more loyal and productive. Absenteeism and tardiness rates decrease as people look forward to going to work. Most importantly, people who have fun on the job are more creative, more productive, better decision-makers, and get along better with co-workers. Yet, very

few organisations are able to create such an environment, Lundin observes. "It's a tough leadership challenge and it requires commitment. It is about how you can co-create an environment that is fun and joyful and makes people happy- it is about creating a high quality of work-life- very few organisations can make this happen because they don't understand the special set of principles involved."

As leaders, he underlines, you cannot demand the change; instead, you have to adopt, lead and inspire the change.

Play

Wondering what you can do? Lundin shares how the fishmongers at Seattle's Pike Place Fish Market are the best examples of what a company can do to introduce fun into the workplace and reap the rewards. The fishmongers are known for throwing and catching large slippery fish to the delight of the customers. It's one of the many ways they 'play' - which is the first guiding principle of the Fish! Philosophy. "Work

WHAT WILL YOU LEARN FROM LUNDIN'S PRESENTATION AT THE HR SUMMIT '07?

All over the world, individuals, teams and organisations have rediscovered the importance of HR in establishing a great culture, creating higher levels of morale and motivation, improving efforts to recruit and retain talent and producing a higher quality of life at work. While the provocation that provided the initial spark for this rediscovery was a group of fishmongers, the Fish! stories of everyday folks have kept the fire burning. Lundin will trace this story from its diverse beginnings to today's global phenomenon and while doing so will inspire those of us who choose human resources as our vocation in life to a clearer understanding of our considerable contribution to the world.

made fun gets done, especially when we choose to do serious tasks in a lighthearted, spontaneous way," he explains.

But isn't it true that fun in the workplace can sometimes adversely affect the seriousness of the business? No, refutes Lundin. "Play doesn't affect the seriousness of the business, unless you take yourself seriously at work. When you do that, you create a negative atmosphere," he explains.

However, the use of fun and play in the workplace must be appropriate in nature, and in when and how it is used, cautions

to making your visit memorable and are finding ways to making your day.

Another good example is that of the SouthWest Airlines (SWA), says Lundin. The airline has moved away from the typical approach to passenger service. The SWA flight attendant uniform is casual, differentiating it clearly from other airlines. In addition, they are encouraged to use humour in their customer service – which the passengers seem to appreciate and remember. The recommendations are not limited to fish markets or airlines industries alone.

“When you learn, you have the power to choose your responses to what life brings, you can look for the best and find opportunities you never imagined possible. If you find yourself with an attitude that isn't what you want it to be, you can choose a new one”

Lundin. "It should never be offensive."

Besides, it is imperative to remember that play is not just an activity. "It's a state of mind that brings new energy to the tasks at hand and sparks creative solutions." An organisation must understand how to harness the power of fun to lighten the atmosphere and create an environment that nurtures innovation and creativity. But it isn't something you do alone. You have to work with all the other ingredients too to optimise productivity at work, he emphasises.

Make their day

While fun in the workplace can elevate the productivity level amongst employees to a great extent, you can turn routine encounters at business – be it employees or customers – into special memories through an unforgettable engagement, Lundin tells us. Going back to the example of the fishmongers, he says, on entering the fish market, you may be misled into thinking that you are being entertained. When the reality is that the fishmongers are dedicated

In the workplace, a small gesture of kindness, remembering a name or offering a word of support during a difficult time can make the day of your customers and fellow team members, he says.

Be present and choose your attitude

Beyond that, Lundin notes, as an employer or employee, it is vital to abide by the third guiding principle of the Fish! Philosophy: being there! "You have to be there. It doesn't work if you work over the shoulders," he emphasises. Besides, he feels, being present wholeheartedly at work is one of the greatest ways to fight

burnout and fatigue, "for it's those half-hearted tasks that you perform while juggling other things that wear you out".

However, ultimately, it's all about bringing the right attitude to work and the final choice with regards to attitude lies with you, maintains Lundin.

"Attitudes can enhance or pollute the work place. Attitudes can create a rich environment or a toxic energy dump. When workers understand the choices they have and the importance of those choices you are half way there. When you learn, you have the power to choose your responses to what life brings, you can look for the best and find opportunities you never imagined possible. If you find yourself with an attitude that isn't what you want it to be, you can choose a new one," he advises. But the biggest challenge is that though organisations want to resolve the problems they have with engaging staff the Fish! way, "they don't want to pay the price". And what's the price? "Fish is free – it doesn't cost money, but you have to become a participant in the process," he answers. The price is personal investment in the form of modeling, inspiration and real conversations. And this is the world of HR, Lundin adds.

There is also nothing quite as magical as a company that has happy and laughing employees who are good, productive and loyal at the same time. If you can adopt the Fish! Philosophy, maybe this magic can transform your organisation into a productive and financially profitable workplace environment too. **HRM**

CATS

Stephen's current writing passion is called: *Cats: The Nine Lives of Innovation*. It is a book on innovation that has a personal perspective in contrast to most books on innovation which have a corporate perspective. "I believe that if you want to increase the level of innovation in organisations you have to provide individuals with tools they can use at work or outside of work and in which they see value."