



Make Their Day  
**FACILITATOR'S GUIDE**



*The FISH! For Leaders Series is dedicated to John Gardner,  
whose belief in human possibilities  
inspired several generations to believe in themselves.*

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# What is FISH! For Leaders?



Early in his career, Carl Rogers, the noted psychologist, thought his job was to fix people. He asked himself, “How can I cure or change this person?”

Despite his extensive training, it didn’t work. At times his tactics seemed to produce a change in people, but it was temporary at best.

So Rogers tried a different approach. Instead of trying to mold his patients into who he wanted *them* to be, he focused on how *he* “showed up” for them. The more people saw that he cared about and believed in them, they discovered within themselves the capacity to change, mature and develop.

Rogers’ experience speaks to the heart of leadership. Effective leaders don’t try to fix or control others. Instead, they ask themselves: “How can I develop relationships with the people I lead that help them grow in confidence, commitment, skill and purpose?”

We created The FISH! For Leaders Series—of which this program is a part—to help you develop more supportive relationships through The FISH! Philosophy. These relationships are the foundation that make you more effective in every other aspect of your leadership.

## **The FISH! Philosophy: Fundamentals For Leaders**

The roots of The FISH! Philosophy go back to the day John Christensen first visited the Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle. Selling fish was cold and exhausting, yet the fishmongers brought so much energy, commitment, service, teamwork and fun to the job that people came from around the world just to watch them sell fish—a lot of fish.

John had always been fascinated by people who brought passion to their work, and saw the fish market as a metaphor to illustrate his belief that every workplace can be more alive and engaged. He made a film about the market to show everyone how to be more engaged in their work—and their lives. The film, FISH!, explores four simple practices that anyone, from frontline to CEO, can immediately apply:

**Be There:** Be physically and emotionally present for people, especially when they need you. It’s a powerful message of respect that strengthens relationships.

## What is FISH! For Leaders?



**Play:** Play is a state of mind that you can apply to any task. It's the spirit that fuels creativity, as in "Let's Play with that idea!" You do your best work when you are having fun doing it.

**Make Their Day:** Find ways to make people feel special, letting them know how much you value and appreciate them. Celebrate others.

**Choose Your Attitude:** No matter what life throws in your path, you alone are responsible for how you respond to it.

We call these four practices The FISH! Philosophy. Just as a tree needs healthy roots to bear good fruit, these practices nourish the roots of trust, communication, commitment and accountability. Organizations around the world are using The FISH! Philosophy to improve business results and create a higher quality of life at work. We have learned that organizations are most likely to succeed when leaders don't simply expect their employees to live FISH!, but embrace these fundamental practices in their own lives first.

Using this program, you will take your team through conversations and activities through which they will explore their leadership beliefs and style, consider their impact and learn how to lead even more effectively. Thank you for guiding them on this important journey.

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A CEO had just been told that morale in the office was down. People were working hard, but they weren't feeling appreciated. "Our people don't feel valued!" he told a vice president, his voice rising. "We have to find a way to get them to feel valued! What can we do to make them feel valued?"

The VP thought for a moment. "How about if we actually value them?" he said.

There are lots of ways to make an employee's day, or month, or year. A fair salary and benefits meet their economic needs. A safe, comfortable workplace meets their physical needs. Formal awards fulfill their achievement needs. While these things are essential, they are not a substitute for the human connections that meet people's emotional needs.

That's why reward programs, in the absence of meaningful relationships, won't automatically solve morale or trust problems. Say you "get" something—an award for years of service, for example—from someone who does little to get to know you or acknowledge you. You may value the "thing" you received, but you're not likely to trust the person who dispenses it any more than you did before. Given the conflict between the message in the award and the message in the person's daily actions, you may trust them less.

So how do you Make Their Day in a way that is most meaningful? It starts with being there. Notice who people are and what they actually do. Tell them how much you appreciate something they've accomplished—or who they had to be to accomplish it—the more specific, the better. Ask their opinion and really consider it. Ask for people's ideas, put them to use and publicly give credit when you do. Encourage people, especially when they're faced with a challenge they are not sure they are capable of overcoming.

Rewards and celebrations are wonderful, and they are even more meaningful when they affirm the appreciation you are already demonstrating.

*"A candle loses none of its light by lighting another candle."*

—ANONYMOUS

The resources in this guide were designed to lead a session from one to two hours, but you can easily adapt them to create a session of any length.

## 1. Video

*Make Their Day* is 7 minutes in length. Key themes include:

- Why every person wants and needs to know they are appreciated.
- How simple gestures and symbols can make people feel valued.
- When people feel heard, they feel respected.

## 2. Conversation Starters

Targeted questions, prompted by the video, help your group to begin exploring your beliefs about leadership. These questions help you to honestly assess whether the impact you are having is the impact you want to have.

## 3. Activities

Choose from several activities to help participants become engaged in their learning and take ownership of it. If you have purchased FISH! For Leaders Participant Workbooks for individual participants, we've provided page references so you can help them follow along during the session.

Example: *(If using Participant Workbook, see Workbook page 6.)*

## 4. Action Plan

John Keats said, "Nothing becomes real until it is experienced." Here your participants come up with their own plan to act on what they have learned. The actions may be simple: If you feel you haven't been connecting with your colleagues, you might decide "the first thing I'll do when I arrive in the morning is to greet every person in my area by name."

## 5. Tips

If participants are not sure what to try or need more ideas, we've provided some suggestions.

## 6. Follow-Up

After you put your ideas into action, it helps to reflect on what you learned. What worked? What didn't? What impact did it have on others? What impact did it have on you?

## Introducing the Video



Before your team watches *Make Their Day*, it's helpful to give some context. Here's one way to introduce the film:

*What makes your day? Money? Chocolate? Real estate? How about when somebody tells you how much they appreciate you?*

*As leaders, we can't always fall back on money as a way of making the day of our team members. But we can let them know how much we value them. We can recognize and thank them. Studies show that people stay with jobs, not just because of money, but because they feel acknowledged and encouraged.*

*Recognizing and thanking people is so simple to do that we often overlook it. As you watch the video, ask yourself, "What can I do to let people know how much I appreciate and value them?"*

# Conversation Starters



We included lots of questions to prompt discussion, but don't feel you have to get through every question in one session. You may want to choose two to three questions and if you have time for more, go for it. If a particular question really ignites discussion, don't feel you have to move on immediately to the next question. Go with the energy of the group. Keep the conversation going with statements such as, "Tell me more about that."

1. What is the most memorable thing someone did to show you that they believed in you? What impact has that had on your life?
2. John Gardner says, "People want to know if followers believe in their leaders. A more relevant question is if leaders believe in their followers." What about your team do you believe in? How often do you tell them that?
3. How do you show your team that you appreciate them? How consistently do you do that?
4. The Ranken Jordan Hospital staff is intentional about what they celebrate, Angie says in the video, "because those are the things that move us forward." What behaviors move your team forward? How might you celebrate those behaviors?
5. At Ranken Jordan, when you want to thank a coworker, you give them a fish. It may be silly and plastic, but to them it's a symbol of their shared commitments. Giving a fish is a simple, meaningful way of saying, "Thanks for demonstrating what we stand for."
  - What do you think of this? Is this more effective than just offering thanks? Why or why not?
  - What simple token or symbol could you give that reinforces your team's goals and values?
  - What impact would giving such a symbol have on your team?
6. When you are recognized at work, what makes the recognition most meaningful to you? What kinds of recognition are *not* meaningful to you? Why?
7. We saw how Fiskars works to give its employees a regular voice in company decisions. How important is it for people to have "a voice" in their workplace? Have you ever been in a job where you did not have a voice? How did that feel?
8. What kind of a voice do your team members have? What are you doing to hear their voices?

## Activity #1: 50 Ways to Make Their Day



Usually when we prepare for a celebration, we work hard to decorate the physical space with balloons, posters and streamers. What if we put as much effort into decorating our emotional space—with thanks, compliments and encouragement?

Ranken Jordan's staff show their appreciation for each other in many ways—a smile, a kind word, a goofy plastic fish that symbolizes their shared commitment to their patients, the monthly Big Fish award (entitling the honoree to the primo parking space for a month).

The award or honor isn't what matters most to the recipient; what matters is a colleague put the team's values into action and you cared enough to notice and acknowledge them.

### Instructions

There are countless ways to make someone's day. The only limit is your imagination. Here's an exercise to strengthen your Make Their Day muscles.

1. Divide a piece of flip chart paper into four sections.
2. Ask the group to write in each of the sections the name of a group or person that they serve as a leader. For example, in one square they may write Employees; in another, Customers; in another, Management; and so on. Other possibilities might be Students, Parents, Community, Shareholders, etc.
3. For 5-7 minutes the group will brainstorm 50 ways to make the day of the people they listed, writing their ideas in the appropriate section. They must come up with at least five ideas per category.
4. Remind the group to move quickly. Any idea is a good idea; the only bad idea is one that isn't mentioned. Withhold judgment of all ideas until after the brainstorm.
5. For 10-15 minutes have the groups identify their top 10 ideas overall, including at least one idea from each section, and come up with a plan to put them into action.

## Activity #1: 50 Ways to Make Their Day *(continued)*



6. Make a copy of the 50 ideas and email it later to each participant so they have plenty of Make Their Day ideas for the next year.  
*(If using Participant Workbook, have people record their favorite Make Their Day ideas on Workbook page 6.)*

### Action Plan

Ask participants, “What will you do to put two ideas from your Make Their Day list into action next week? Write what you will do and when you will do it.”

*(If using Participant Workbook, see Workbook page 7.)*

### Tips

- Hand out recognition slips to your team. Ask them to fill out a slip and put it in the Acknowledgment Bucket when they want to thank teammates for their contributions or help. There is no limit to the number of slips you can fill out. Be sure to contribute generously to the Acknowledgment Bucket yourself. Read the notes at weekly staff meetings, print them in a newsletter, or broadcast via email.
- One year Ranken Jordan designed four T-shirts, each a different color, for each of its values. On the shirts was written: “You were caught . . . being there/playing/making their day/choosing your attitude.” Staff nominated coworkers they saw living those values. Each quarter the nominations were published in a special newsletter and honorees received a T-shirt corresponding with the value they had demonstrated. On any given day you will see people throughout the hospital wearing their shirts, each one a colorful reminder of what they strive to live. What can you give people that they can keep using? Some ideas: shirts, hats, mouse pads, bags, screensavers, etc.
- Once a month at Ranken Jordan Hospital, the FISH! board marches through the facility to honor one employee who has exemplified FISH! during that time. The Big Fish recipient gets to park closest to the front door for the next month and their picture are displayed prominently by the reception desk so everyone, visitors included, knows who the honoree is. When you give awards to employees for living your values, publicize them, not only to the staff, but to your customers.
- Create a section in the company/department newsletter recognizing employee ideas and how they helped the team. Or you can put up a “Way to Go!” board or designate some formal location where team members can acknowledge one another’s ideas.

## Activity #2: I Appreciate You Because...



It is always more meaningful to hear specific praise than the vague, all-purpose, “You’re doing a great job!” The former tells us that the praise-giver actually understands and values what they’re praising us for.

When we acknowledge our coworkers, not because we want something but really value them, it builds trust between us. Trust prepares us for the inevitable challenges that all teams face so when there is a crisis, as Ranken Jordan CEO Lauri Tanner says of her close-knit staff, “we’re ready to go.”

### Instructions

Everyone wants to be recognized—even leaders. This exercise gives participants a chance to experience the feeling of appreciation we all want.

1. Divide into groups of six to eight, sitting in a circle.
2. Give each person a piece of paper, and have them write “I Appreciate (their own name) because....”
3. Have them pass the paper to the person on their right.
4. Tell everyone to write what they appreciate or admire about the person whose name is on the paper they are holding, then pass the paper to the right.

Repeat step 4 until the paper travels back to the person whose name is on it.

5. Give everyone two minutes to read what’s on the paper.
6. Ask: “How does it feel to read what people wrote about you? How does it make you feel about what you do?” Have a few volunteers share their thoughts.  
*(If using Participant Workbook, ask people to write on Workbook page 9 how it feels to have been recognized.)*

## Activity #2: I Appreciate You Because... *(continued)*



7. Playing off their comments, ask: “What impact would it have on your team if they regularly experienced what you just experienced?”

This exercise works best with participants who know each other well. But you can still find something good to say about people with whom you are not as close. If the group is not close, here are some suggestions:

- Your team always performs well, and that must be due to your leadership.
- You really care about the people who work with you.
- You’ve offered some great insights that I want to use with my team.
- You make people feel comfortable.
- You really listen well.

### Action Plan

Ask participants, “What will you do to recognize the good things your team does for our customers and for each other? Write what you will do and when you will do it.”

*(If using Participant Workbook, see Workbook page 9.)*

### Tips

- It is always more meaningful to hear specific praise than the vague, all-purpose, “You’re doing a great job!” The former tells us that the praise-giver actually understands and values what they’re praising us for. Acknowledgment is especially helpful when it points out what we did and who we were “being” when we did it. For example: “I admire how calm and encouraging you were when you listened to that upset patient. You reminded me what our team’s values are all about.”
- The next time a person comes to you with a good idea, don’t just thank them. Ask, “How did you come up with that idea?” Listen carefully to their story and watch their enthusiasm grow as they share it. Showing a sincere interest in people’s thought processes, not just the results of their thoughts, recognizes them as creative—and encourages them to use their gifts even more. Don’t forget to share their story so others can offer their congratulations as well.
- Ask each team member how they prefer to be acknowledged and thanked. Do they want to be recognized privately or publicly? Stock a drawer with notes, candy, gold bars or whatever they prefer.

## Activity #3: BONUS Discussion: Helping Others Grow



Harry, a mutual funds salesman, had a problem, so he went to see Edith, his manager. She listened carefully, then asked, “What do you think?” Harry shared his thoughts while Edith kept asking questions that eventually guided him to an answer they both agreed would work.

As he walked back to his desk, Harry had a realization: He had always thought of Edith as the person who solved his problems for him. But she had actually been showing him how to solve his own problems. She had subtly helped him to become more confident and competent.

Every person has within himself or herself the capacity to move beyond what they are now. Psychologist Carl Rogers called this the “process of becoming.” When we view people as “fixed,” already shaped by their past, we confirm their view of themselves, Rogers noted. But if we see people as a “process of becoming,” they will tend to act in ways that confirm their potential.

That’s what leaders do when they encourage people to stretch past self-imposed limits, to push past their fears, to excel in ways they never thought possible. It means expecting the best from people and it can’t happen without encouragement, compassion and patience; without these qualities, a leader who pushes and harangues people is little more than a dictator.

### Questions

- What are you doing to help your team members grow? How does that help your team?
- What do I see that is possible for my team members that they may not see for themselves?

### Action Plan

Ask participants, “What will you do to help your team members grow and reach their professional potential? Write what you will do and when you will do it.”

*(If using Participant Workbook, see Workbook page 11.)*



## Tips

- On a sheet of paper, briefly describe the potential you see in each team member—what you know they can do, what you know they want to do, and the passions or talents that will help them get there. Refer to this paper from time to time so you are prepared to see and speak to team members in a way that encourages their potential.
- Ask your team to write three things they've always dreamed of learning; this will help you get to know them better. Also ask them to write three things they'd like to learn at work. Brainstorm with them about how to make this happen—such as making time in their schedules for educational reading or continuing education opportunities.
- Think of a person who you see as “lacking.” List five things about the person that you do admire. (Or notice the things they are accomplishing.) During the next week, focus on those qualities. If the opportunity arises, praise them for those qualities. At week's end, consider the person again. Have they changed in any way? Has your view of them changed?
- This is a variation on one of the Tips in the FISH! For Leaders: Play program: When someone makes an honest effort or proposes an idea that you believe can be improved, instead of saying, “That's great but . . .” say, “That's great and . . .” Focus first on what was great about the idea or effort, as in “What's great about that project is how organized you were . . . and . . . maybe next time we could build in more time for the product development team!” For one week, try to find something right in every idea you hear. Practice at home too.



1. If your team has a regularly scheduled meeting, check in with participants next time you get together. Review what they wrote in their action plans/commitments. Ask:
  - What new things did you do?
  - What happened?
  - What was the impact on others?
  - What was the impact on you?
2. To remind participants of your *Make Their Day* conversations and their action plans, send them occasional emails of the Tips from the end of each section.

*“The really great make you feel that you, too, can become great.”*

—MARK TWAIN



The FISH! For Leaders Series consists of six programs, each of which helps leaders to be more effective by applying one aspect of The FISH! Philosophy. Use any combination of these six thought-provoking programs to create the leadership training that fits your team's needs.

FISH! For Leaders programs include:

### **It Starts with Me**

The secret to outstanding leadership is not in what you command others to do for you, but what you inspire them to do through your example.

### **Be There**

People may admire your talent, charisma and business skill, but they will not really trust you until you make the effort to be present for them, emotionally as well as physically.

### **Play**

You can't just order creativity like a lunch special or install happiness like a program. To enjoy the many business and human benefits of Play, leaders must first nurture an environment that is full of trust and respect, and free of fear.

### **Make Their Day**

One of the best ways for a leader to make someone's day—or month, or year, or life—is to value them. Simple gestures, such as appreciation and giving people a voice, fulfill emotional needs that are too often ignored on the job.

### **Choose Your Attitude**

Your attitude has a powerful effect on the people you lead. What impact do you want to have on others? You alone are responsible for choosing the attitude that will achieve that impact.

### **Who Are You Being?**

Great leaders are guided by what they stand for, not by the temporary ups and downs happening around them. To lead more intentionally, you must define your purpose, recommit to it every day and ask others to help you be the person you say you want to be.