

Fishing Story

By Markku Kauppinen

Dave could make everyone laugh. A few people did not appreciate his humor as it could be rather crude at times, but his delivery made up for his occasional lack of tact. His laughter was contagious, and he always had a new story to tell. Monday was always the best day of the week to hear Dave's stories. He had two days worth of tales to tell.

Dave was an avid fisherman. Even his email address started: "redfishdave@". Almost every week Dave was after me: "Let's go fishing this weekend Markku." I consistently declined for a very good, but a completely selfish reason: I am not a morning person! However, since Dave and I were pretty good friends and I wanted to keep it that way, it got to a point where I knew I had to say: "Yes."

The Sunday morning following my reluctant acceptance of Dave's fishing offer, at about 4:30 a.m., there was a cheerful knocking on my front door. I opened the door, and Dave was there with a big smile on his face. He handed me an even bigger coffee mug and said: "Let's go fishing Markku."

I was sleepy and cranky as I climbed into his new pick-up truck. About 45 minutes later we arrived at the boat launch. As I stepped out of the truck I could feel that the caffeine had kicked in, and I was beginning to feel like me again. Dave's stories on the way had helped my mood considerably. As I looked over the bayou and saw the sun coming up, I felt even better. It was very beautiful and peaceful. I realized that this excursion was going to be a lot of fun.

We launched the boat. Dave started the engine and headed toward what must have been one of his favorite fishing spots. He clearly knew the way well. About 30 minutes later he threw out the anchor and looked at me with a big smile.

"What do you want to fish?" Dave asked me.

I drew a complete blank. The only thought I could muster was: "Fish...?"

"How about redfish?" Dave rescued me.

"What a great idea!" I thought to myself as Dave placed his large tackle box on the floor of his boat. As Dave proudly opened his spanking new tackle box, I could almost hear the trumpets blare and see the bright shining light come down from the heavens. He must have had at least \$3,000 worth of tackles and gear in the box. At least that's how I interpreted his proud look.

Expertly, Dave reached for a very specific lure, skillfully attached it to the end of the line, and handed the rod to me.

"Start fishing", he told me.

"Aye, aye Captain", I replied and started casting away. Dave also handed me an icy cold beer. It was about 6:00 a.m. I was beginning to see why fishing was so popular in the Sportsman's Paradise.

What do you know, after about only 10 minutes of casting, out of all the different kinds of fish in the bayou, we were both pulling in good-sized redfish. Now, I was really having fun! About 90 minutes and three beers later, Dave looked at the cooler full of fish.

"We are about to go over the limit here", he said. I had no idea what that meant, but fortunately Dave continued: "It is still early. Why don't we catch a few speckled trout before we head back home?"

Unexpectedly, Dave took the rod from my hands. He removed the tackle from the end of the line and placed it back in its place in the tackle box. He looked for a different kind of lure and attached it to the line. He then handed the rod back to me.

"Start fishing", he told me.

“Aye, aye Captain”, I replied and started casting away with noticeably better style.

Now out of all the different kinds of fish in the bayou, we were catching speckled trout! Fishing was really fun. Two hours later, Dave dropped me off at my driveway. We shook hands and agreed to go fishing again soon. I went inside and proudly placed my cleaned catch in the freezer. Ten minutes later, I was sleeping on the couch. The sun and the beer had taken their toll.

The next morning I sat in my office and looked out of the window of my bank branch. I was thinking about the fishing trip the day before, and I suddenly saw an analogy between the trip and my job. I was well aware that how my performance was being evaluated was almost completely dependent on how my employees carried out their responsibilities. My pay raises, any possible promotions, just about everything was dependent on how well I led and motivated my employees. I thought I was doing well, but I knew I could do even better.

My thoughts turned back to the fishing trip with Dave. How were we able to catch exactly the kind of fish we wanted to catch? It was so simple: It was because Dave and I gave the fish what they wanted! But here I was a manager of all of these employees, and I was giving my employees what I thought they should get!! The kind of communication style I preferred, the kind of motivation style I liked, the kind of leadership I thought was the best – suddenly it was so clear.

Of course I would not get the results I wanted to achieve if I did not give my employees what they wanted and needed. If I wanted to achieve better results, I needed to change MY behaviors. I realized that there are questions we can all ask ourselves, questions that can enhance all of our lives: What kind of behaviors are you fishing with? Do you have enough lures in your tackle box?

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My Dinner with Bono

By Marshall Goldsmith

A little while back I had the opportunity to sit next to Bono—yes, that Bono—at a charity fundraiser. I am 58 years old, and since his music was recorded sometime after 1975, I was unfamiliar with it. Fortunately for me, he did not discuss his music. He discussed his life.

After listening to Bono share his personal story, I realized that he is a wonderful example of a person who has not only changed his behavior but also his identity, or definition of who he is—while remaining authentic and not becoming a phony.

In my work as a coach, I help top executives achieve positive change in their leadership behavior. Over the years, I have begun to realize that if we want behavioral change to last, we need to focus not just on how we act. We also need to look at how we define ourselves—the personal identity we create for ourselves. This is just very abstract—there could be some concrete image or anecdote to pin it down. I noticed over abstraction in couple of other places too—it’s hard not to slip into when writing about philosophical ideas—something to think about when revising.

From Regular Bloke to Rock Star

Bono’s early identity was “regular guy.” He was not brought up rich and had a disdain for pretension. It was easy to see how he has maintained this identity.

In our one-on-one conversation, as well as in his after-dinner speech, Bono was self-deprecating. As we spoke, his language was very much the language of the “regular guy.” He politely apologized to me for using variations on the “f-word” a few times. (I assured him that this language was not troubling to me. As a teenager I thought it was the adjective that preceded most nouns.) After “regular guy” he became a “rock ‘n’

roll fan." He was animated in his discussion of the musicians that had influenced his life—and how much he enjoyed listening to them as a youth. In his speech he was generous in his praise for other musicians and in his admiration of their work.

Bono's next identity was "musician." He described how he had made a commitment to his craft—and how much he enjoyed what he did. He talked about the joy of playing music? with friends when no status or money was involved.

His next identity was "rock star." He clearly liked being a rock star. He enjoyed the fame, the large coliseums filled with adoring fans, and the access to influential people that being a rock star provided. (Sitting next to him in a room filled with hundreds of people was an interesting experience. For a while, I kept wondering why so many beautiful young women seemed to be staring at me. I got the feeling that being a rock star was a good thing!)

Becoming a Humanitarian

As much as he remained a regular guy, he was clearly a huge rock 'n' roll fan, loved being a musician, and enjoyed the life of a rock star—Bono was even more excited about his new role. He was now a humanitarian. The tense is confusing through this whole piece—notice how in the previous sentence "he was" is past tense, but "now" is present tense. I noticed this sort of thing through the whole piece.

He recounted with deep feeling his experience of visiting Africa during the great famine of the '80s. (I spent nine days there as a Red Cross volunteer and watched many people die of starvation, and I could relate to this experience.) He talked about his desire to help those who needed help the most and to alleviate human suffering. It was clear that a large part of the rest of his life would be devoted to doing whatever he could to make our world a better place.

In his after-dinner speech he did not take cheap shots at politicians, governments, or anyone else—even when certain questions teed up this opportunity. He was clearly there to raise money and

to help people in need—not to prove how smart or clever he was.

He was sincere in expressing gratitude to anyone who was helping out in any way. His need to help others far exceeded his need to be right. He is a man with a mission. He isn't pretending to be a humanitarian – he is a humanitarian.

Avoid Self-Limiting Definitions

After having dinner with Bono, I reflected upon how he had changed. He did not let the definition of who he was limit his potential for who he could become.

One of our greatest challenges in changing behavior can be our self-limiting definitions of who we are. We send messages to ourselves like: "I just can't speak in front of a group." "I could never lead others." "That just isn't me!" We often think of our identity as fixed. It doesn't have to be. For example, if we define ourselves by saying "I am a terrible listener," we will create the reality that we become a terrible listener. And even worse—if someone says that we are a good listener, we won't believe them. We will say to ourselves: "That's not the real me."

When my clients describe self-limiting identities, such as being a poor listener, I ask them if they want to change. When they say they do, I assure them that they do not have incurable genetic defects that are stopping them from listening. Not only can they change their behavior—and become good listeners—they can change their definition of who they are.

Overcome the Obstacles in Your Mind

Who is the you that you want to become? Have you defined yourself in a way that limits your own potential? In the same way that Bono changed not just his behavior but his definition of who he is, you can change your definition of who you are and change your role in the world. Figure out the role you would like to play in life. Outside of real physical or resource limitations (e.g., I cannot be

a pro basketball player at age 58, no matter how much I try), what is holding you back?

You may not be able to overcome all of the obstacles in the world, but you can overcome the obstacles in your own mind!

Dr. Marshall Goldsmith was recently named by the American Management Association as one of 50 great thinkers and business leaders who have impacted the field of management. His 18 books include the Business Week best-seller, *The Leader of the Future* and *Global Leadership: The Next Generation*. Marshall is a world authority in helping successful leaders achieve positive change in behavior: for themselves, their people and their teams.