

8 The Fisherman

A successful businessman happened to be on a business trip to Japan. During an afternoon break, he wandered down to the coast, and sat watching a fisherman tend his nets on his fishing boat, before putting out to sea.

The next day, again during a morning break, he wandered to the



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same place, and saw the fisherman's boat lying idle on the beach. The fisherman was sat beside the boat, enjoying the sun, gazing out to sea. Each morning and afternoon, for the next three days, the businessman took the same breaks, and saw the same things.

On the final day, in the afternoon, the businessman walked over to the fisherman, and said:

“Hi. I can't help noticing that you work really hard during

the afternoon, preparing your boat for the sea. And each morning the boat is sitting idle on the beach. Each day you do the same. Can I make a suggestion?”

“Your boat is under-utilised. You only use it in the afternoon – yet there must be fish out there all day. You are only working half the day. Why don't you fish with it all day – or better still, why don't you hire your boat out in the morning?” “Thank you,” said the fisherman, “but why would I do that?”

“Well,” said the businessman, “that way you could make more money. With that money you could invest in another boat, and hire that out too.”

“Again, thank you,” said the fisherman, “but why would I do that?”

“Well,” said the businessman, with just a hint of frustration in his voice, “then you could have others working for you, and you would have more time in the day”

“Like I do now?” said the fisherman...

There are three things we can be committed to, or motivated by. The first is achieving results. The second is enjoying the journey (whether you get anywhere or not). And the third, is enjoying the state of ‘being’ - such as ‘being content’, or ‘being happy’. Clearly the businessmen was motivated by results, such as material gain, financial reward, or business success.

But the fisherman was motivated by something else – a contentment or happiness with his life as it was. The businessman assumed the fisherman would have a similar motivation to himself – which might be a good reason to check assumptions we make. The businessman seemed to be happy with his business plan, but even he accepted that the ultimate aim of all his hard work was to achieve a similar state to that already achieved by the fisherman.

Sometimes we might be focused on the wrong things; things that appear to matter, in the longer term, might not.

... and whatever our motivation, it is ours to choose.

“If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten” (R. Kipling)

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