

Connecting Through Books

The Fred Factor, by Mark Sanborn

Attempt to do one extraordinary thing a day. Realistic? We think so. *The Fred Factor* by Mark Sanborn, is a book about uncommon and extraordinary customer service. How many “Fred’s” do you know?

Okay. We know that isn’t really fair. What is a Fred, or who is Fred and what makes a good Fred? Freds “...distinguish themselves not by the results they achieve but how they have affected and touched others.”

Fred, in *The Fred Factor* is a mail carrier who delivers mail and extraordinary customer service to people on his route. In this book, Fred delivers mail at the author’s house in Denver. Fred is always watching out for his customers. On one occasion the author was away on business and Fred noticed a package addressed to the author had been delivered by UPS to the wrong house. Fred took the package to Sanborn’s house, left a note explaining how he had found it and made it less conspicuous to passers by and hid it under the door mat. So not only was Fred delivering the US Mail, he was making up for a mistake made by UPS. Fred the Postman is a golden example of great customer service.

This book is all about recognizing the positive things in a company, your life and your relationships. As the author says, it’s easy to find and point out things that are wrong or aren’t the best customer service. The challenge becomes to point out the really great and extraordinary things that go on every day. B.C. Forbes, founder of Forbes magazine, once said, “There is more credit and satisfaction in being a first rate truck driver than there is in being a 10th rate executive.” Andrew Carnegie is quoted in the book as saying, “There are two types of people who never achieve very much in their lifetimes. One is the person who won’t do what he or she is told to do, and the other is the person who does no more than what he or she is told to do.”

When we read this book, we were sufficiently motivated that we bought copies and gave them to support staff members at our respective companies. Business friends of ours have given them as Christmas gifts. And we recommend that if you do give this book to a “Great Fred” write a note inside the cover that says, “You are one of the greatest Freds I know,” or “I read this and it immediately reminded me of you.”

The Fred Factor is a fairly easy read and will take about 2 hours to read one night before bed. You can impact people’s lives with this book. As Sandborn says in the book, “Nobody can prevent you from choosing to be exceptional. At the end of the day, the only question that matters is, what kind of difference did you make.”

To quote Abraham Lincoln, “Whatever you are, be a good one.”

Please feel free to comment on this column. If you have a favorite business book you’d like for us to review, let us know. Norma Havens can be reached at

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