

# No More Customers

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By Michael DiLauro, CMA

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Please indulge me and let me make a few additional comments about my premise on fans. As you can probably guess, I'm rather fond of the premise, not because I thought of it – please, I'm not quite that shallow – but because, for me, it simplifies how I run my business. I'd also like to explain the background for my premise, which speaks about the homogeneity, the uniformity – *the monotony* of much of today's business world, and I'd also like to take a stab at answering the most common question I'm asked about fans.

Have you ever noticed the formulaic world that we live in? Drive into any city and you'll find the same restaurants, the same shops, the same-sounding radio stations airing the same playlists – even the radio jingles are the same, all they change are the call letters. Don't you get tired of the *sameness* of it all? But find a unique B&B, or a distinctive, innovative restaurant that serves dishes prepared with a flair for creativity and originality and you'll rave about it for months to come. And that's exactly what I'm talking about when I say that we want fans, not customers. Fans make life interesting, fans open up new opportunities, fans introduce us to more fans, and fans inspire us to be original, and creative.

Those that see some merit to this concept usually ask me how to go about getting, or attracting, fans. Pretty simple question and, like many simple questions, answering it is like trying to dissect a snowball. One minute, it's there and the next minute, well you know what happens. It's also a question that's loaded with a huge presupposition. It presupposes a certain predictable formula for converting people into fans. And, you know what? It's not about changing people so that they behave like fans. It's about something more, something better. So let me tell you my theory. Now understand that I haven't conducted any scientific studies to support this theory. So I can't categorically state that this theory has been proven to be 96.5% effective, 99 out of 100 times..... Or anything like that.

You see, the theory I'm about to suggest is more of a gut feeling – just like my fan analogy, that's a gut feeling too, but it's working for me so I don't see why it won't work for you.

OK, so here's the theory; you attract fans by not thinking about them. Got that? Well then, let me explain further. My sense is that you shouldn't be focused on the fans. Rather, you should be thinking about yourself. Thinking about yourself as in; thinking about those things that are truly meaningful to you; as in injecting the essence of your personality into your practice and your service offerings. As in, doing what you truly feel passionate about. If you do that, what you'll find is that some people will want to learn more – those are the fans. The others who aren't really interested? Well, those aren't fans. And that, in a nutshell, is all there is to it.

For those that want something more concrete, ask yourself the following three questions. The first one being; do you really want fans? You had better be sure that you do, indeed, want fans. That's because that slight perceptual shift from clients to fans can have a huge impact on the landscape of your professional practice. To attract fans, you have to get yourself noticed; you have to create a buzz, and - get this - you have to practice accounting, not as a technician, but as an artist. OK, so now you – the reader – are probably getting ready to abandon ship. Practice accounting as an art? How the heck does one practice accounting as an art? Well, my friends, that's up to you to figure out. But here's a hint. You probably got into this accounting game because there was something about it that you found fascinating and intriguing, maybe even stimulating. I'll even suggest that you probably have a treatise, a theory or hypothesis about some aspect of accounting that is uniquely your own. Well, if you've been keeping it to yourself, don't do that anymore. Share it, build on it and promote it. Go ahead and give yourself permission to take that huge body of practice called "accounting" and put your own stamp on it.

Which leads us to the next question, which is, what's meaningful to you? It's got to be something that absolutely turns your crank, something that totally invigorates you. Whatever that is, work with it. Incorporate it into your practice. Talk it up all the time. Because when you do, you'll be speaking from the heart. You'll be speaking about something that has meaning and value. You'll be speaking with an enthusiasm that is both invigorating and infectious. You'll be creating a buzz, and believe me, people will notice. Yes, I know that there will be some who will not like what they're noticing. So what? They're not fans. It's as easy as that. Your fans will be drawn to you and the others won't – at least not right now. And that's fine.

The last question is; are you injecting your true identity, your personality, into your work? If so that's great. If not, then ask yourself this. Why is it that so many of people feel they have to assume a different personality at the office? In her book, *Fully Alive From 9 to 5*, Louse LeBrun tackles this very issue by saying "work is nothing more than a collection of individuals, coming together to produce a particular product or service". So why is it that, since work involves nothing more than individuals contributing to a common objective, many of us still feel that we should check our individual personalities at the door?

Yes I know that, for some, this concept sounds risky. For some, just thinking of going out on the limb, of getting out of the comfort zone, can trigger all those unnerving, and undesired, physiological responses. You know, the sweaty palms, the palpitations.... (By the way I have a theory about that too, but I'll spare you from elaborating). But listen to this. Are there any jazz fans out there? If so, you may have heard of a pianist named Thelonius Monk. Now, this fellow - Monk – contributed to the jazz idiom by stamping his own, quirky, and yet undeniably soulful, style all over it. He developed and embraced a musical approach that was truly his own - he was known to occasionally strike the piano keys with his elbow, for heaven's sake. Of all the jazz guys out on that limb, Monk was definitely the one furthest out. He was out that limb where there weren't even any leaves left, just those little buds. Still today though, his music, his style and technique, are instantly identifiable, and many of his compositions are considered to be jazz classics. He also had – and continues to have – a huge and dedicated following.

So imagine embracing those things that are meaningful, and imagine communicating them with enthusiasm and creativity. Imagine getting up each morning just raring to go. Well that's what happens when you have fans.

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*Michael DiLauro, WEL-Systems® Master Facilitator, Quantum TLC™ Facilitator, Certified Management Accountant, specializes in helping businesses and not for profit organizations consider a whole new view of what money and financial management is all about for them. Mike brings a creative, thought provoking and playful perspective to a topic that many find serious, tedious or unnerving. Mike enjoys his role as a financial writer and educator. He has developed a definitive Quick Books® training guide which is currently used in community college courses and his authored many articles. For more information about Mike's workshops and services visit [www.dilauro.ca](http://www.dilauro.ca).*

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