



The Power of AND

...Or how I learned to stay focused on work and still go fly fishing.

By Eric Balinski

“... a key aspect of highly visionary companies: They do not oppress themselves with what we call the Tyranny of the OR – the rational view that cannot easily accept paradox, which cannot live with two seemingly contradictory forces or ideas at the same time. The Tyranny of OR pushes people to believe that things must be either A **or** B but not both.”

For example:

- ± I am either a low cost supplier **or** I am an innovator
- ± I create wealth for myself/shareholders **or** perform good deeds in the world
- ± I stay focused on completing my work **or** go I fly fishing

“Instead of being oppressed by the Tyranny of the OR, highly visionary companies liberate themselves with the Genius of the AND – the ability to embrace

both extremes of a number of dimensions at the same time. Instead of choosing between A or B, they figure out a way to have both A **AND** B.”

For Example:

- ☉ We are more productive and we create innovation
- ☉ We create profit and we help the world become a better place
- ☉ We stay focused on work **and we go fly fishing**

{Quotes From: Built to Last, by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras, 1994}

Leadership on the Fly™ embraces the *Genius of AND*, helping people accomplish things within themselves, their company or organization that they didn't think were possible. It unleashes the power of possibility, vision, creativity, yet is grounded in practical business principles that can help any leader and organization, in any situation improve its performance.

The principles behind *Leadership on the Fly* began to form in the early 90's when I took over the corporate Marketing Training for a Fortune 100 firm. We employed a stable of the finest MBA level professors from such places as Harvard, Wharton, Kellogg, and University of Michigan. Now, responsible for preparing a training program, it occurred to me: *should these concepts that we taught actually help our company improve results?* Little did I know then that this simple question would change my life forever.

The answers I received from our “stable of experts” regarding this questions was always similar: *trust the ideas of Marketing.* In one regard, this reply appealed to me having been taught these same lessons as a Marketing major in college. Instead, I decided to challenge these ideas and to learn for myself what truly drives company performance. Ironically, my research suggested that it was possible to build a successful, profitable company without a

Leadership on the Fly



Marketing department and results could be sustained for long periods of time.

By 1993, I was introduced to Jim Collins, a rising luminary at Stanford University. Our paths crossed at just the right time to help me challenge some long-held views about leadership, business and organizations. Jim was then researching the question: *How do some companies become truly "great" companies.* The one idea Jim advanced, the *Genius of And*, didn't reveal its promise until I started teaching personnel inside my company.

It quickly became apparent that people had huge mental blocks to learning and embracing the new ideas. However, a difficult consulting project in 1996 helped me overcome this. The project required teaching 125 international cross-functional people a new company strategy. Though I had taught many workshops already, this particular company leader made it clear: I had to use relevant examples that would part the clouds and cause complete acceptance of the new strategy, AND do it in only 4 hours. After numerous false starts, I had to admit that I was stumped. I finally escaped for my annual fall salmon fly fishing trip with a bunch of friends to the Pere Marquette River in Michigan. Amongst nature, fish and friends, the fast approaching deadline stirred the idea of using fish and fishing as a metaphor to explain business. Genius is sometimes the offspring of adversity.

AND what I found in that meeting and every workshop since is whether a person fishes or not, no matter their homeland, or gender, this metaphor is a powerful way to break through the mental barriers that hold us, our businesses and organizations back. AND while not everyone is a master angler, mastery of the principles can make a person a better leader, businessperson, human being, and perhaps a better angler too.

Many of you may think that you must choose between going fly fishing *or* going to work *or* going to the many important meetings on your schedule.

Leadership on the Fly will teach you that these are not exclusive pursuits. Now, the next step in your journey is to embrace the *Power of AND* as I did. Consider embracing these kinds of choices:

- ☉ *We need to develop our organization **and** fly fishing will guide our understanding of ourselves and others*
- ☉ *We need to make our goals **and** can achieve them while fly fishing with our customers & employees*
- ☉ *We must complete our important business meeting **and** we can use the insight of fly fishing to teach us*
- ☉ *We must innovate **and** our natural surroundings hold the lessons to stir our hearts and minds*

The Power of *Leadership on the Fly* is that it shows people the purity of the passion that drives us beyond the quantity of fish we catch. As fly fishermen on the east coast, we have experienced phenomenal fishing. Each engagement with the outdoors holds lessons that can be carried back into our companies, organizations, and personal lives. We can catch lots of fish *AND* we can be responsible to others, the environment, and the resources we are blessed with.

Learn to embrace the *Power of AND* in your life and business!



Eric Balinski is President of Synection and the creator of *Leadership on the Fly*TM. More information about the framework and ideas to unleash your company's possibilities can be found in [Value Based Marketing for Bottom-Line Success](#), published by McGraw-Hill and the American Marketing Association, 2003. Eric can be reach at; ebalinski@synection.net.